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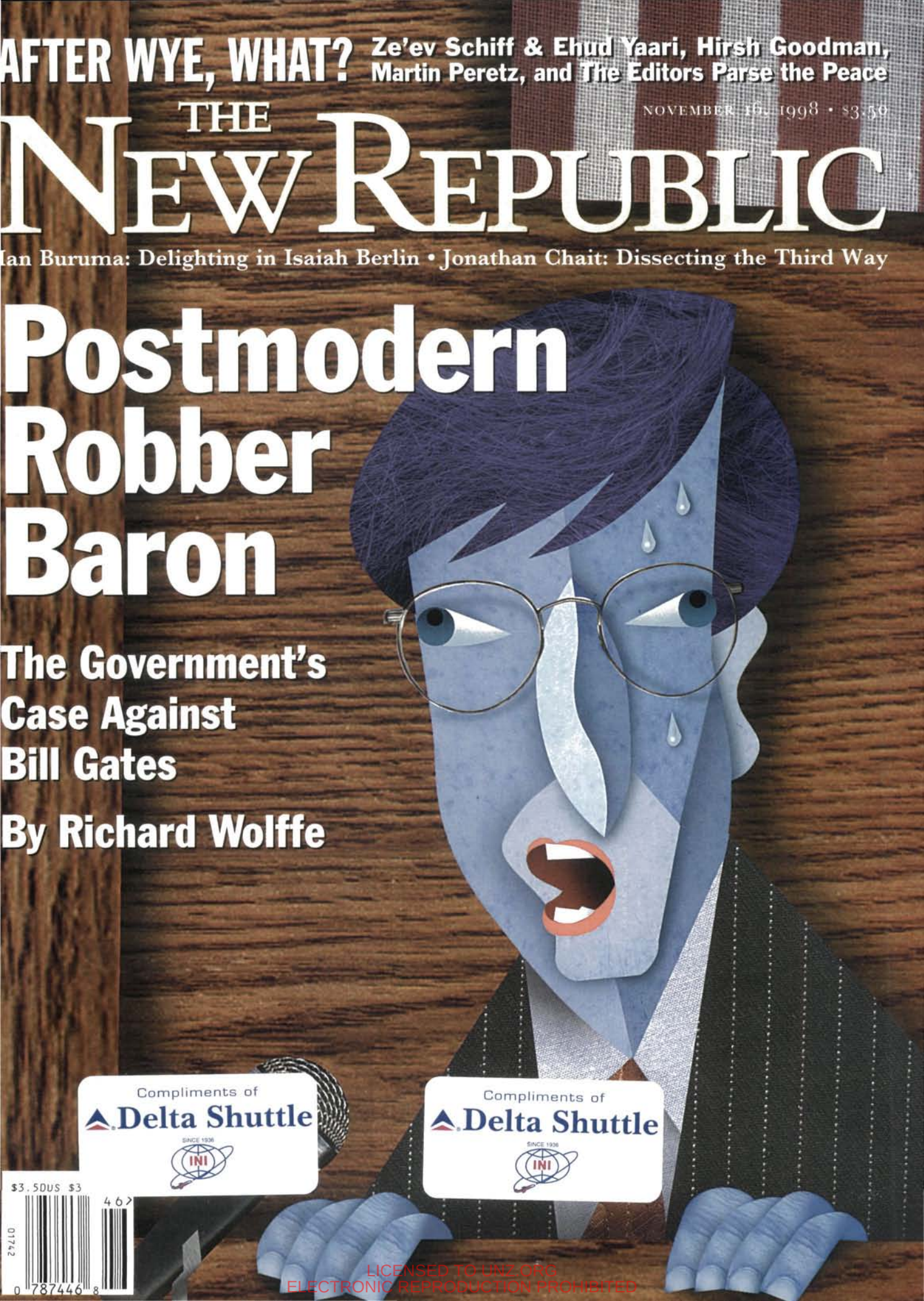

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A Weekly Journal of Opinion

NOVEMBER 16, 1998

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CORRESPONDENCE

Seen the light

To the editors:
Gregg Easterbrook's "Science Sees the Light" (October 12) cogently points out the possibilities for religious meaning that science in fact reveals and the misunderstandings of science by our so-called intellectuals that engender unfounded popular doctrines. Thank you for an excellent selection.

GEORGE F. PAIK
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

To the editors:
After a fairly thorough survey of current scientific thought, Gregg Easterbrook is pleasantly surprised to conclude that his personal belief in the universe's "meaning" has not been definitively undermined. But the fact that the Big Bang theory fails to explain what came before it does not lend credence to belief in a supernatural Creator. Furthermore, it is not enough to point to the sheer complexity of life on Earth as proof positive of a higher cosmic purpose. Yes, the universe does favor complexity under certain environmental conditions. If this means there is a purpose to the universe (to create ever more complex organisms), it is certainly not the kind of higher purpose that drives people to church on Sunday.

KEVIN HUGHES
Los Angeles, California

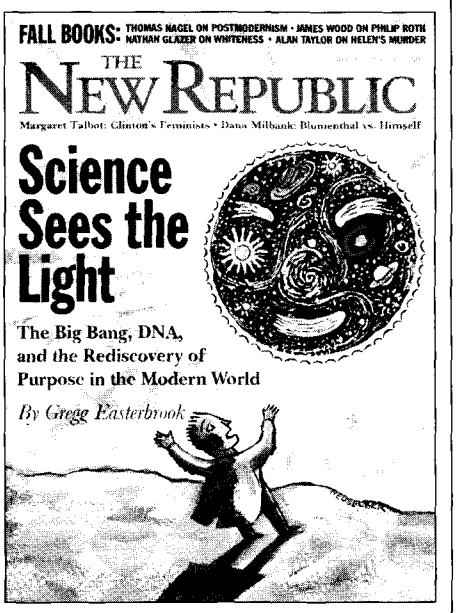
To the editors:
According to Gregg Easterbrook, the new development in thought that allegedly puts meaning back in the universe is that "purpose is something people can make by leading moral lives and helping carry one another's burdens." But who, wise or foolish, ever said we couldn't "make" purposes for ourselves by adopting one goal or another? The point of Sartre and other modernists isn't that we can't adopt purposes but that there are no purposes ordained for humans by God or nature. Their idea may be wrong, but Easterbrook hasn't presented a cogent argument to show that it's on the way out.

JEREMIAH MCCARTHY
Auburn, New York

To the editors:
Gregg Easterbrook leads his readers to believe that the newly revived argument from design he advocates has not been disputed vigorously by a plenitude of philosophers. In fact, individuals such as Kai Neilson, Antony Flew, Adolf Grunbaum, and many others have dealt vigorously with, and failed to find proof of creation in, precisely the amazing details of the Big Bang that Easterbrook describes. Easterbrook's statement that "it is difficult to imagine how an incomplete, initial organism could have functioned before its components were sufficiently established as to be capable of replication and development" smacks of creation science. He should reread Richard Dawkins, whom he unfairly derides, more carefully.

EVAN KAISER
Seekonk, Massachusetts

Gregg Easterbrook replies:
On subjects like this, disagreement is to be expected, but Evan Kaiser employs the browbeating technique of characterizing ideas he doesn't agree with as "creation science." Attempting to imagine how the earliest, incomplete organisms could have survived is among the liveliest topics in current evolutionary biology. Kaiser might consult the 1995 book *Vital Dust*, by the Nobel-winning biologist Christian de Duve, which addresses this problem at length, or, since he favors Richard Dawkins, Dawkins's own 1996 *Climbing Mount Improbable*, which also concerns the unlikelihood of early life.


FALL BOOKS: THOMAS NAGEL ON POSTMODERNISM • JAMES WOOD ON PHILIP ROTH
NATHAN GLAZER ON WHITENESS • ALAN TAYLOR ON HELEN'S MURDER
THE NEW REPUBLIC
Margaret Talbot: Clinton's Feminists • Dana Milbank: Blumenthal vs. Himself
Science Sees the Light
The Big Bang, DNA, and the Rediscovery of Purpose in the Modern World
By Gregg Easterbrook

To the editors:
Gregg Easterbrook claims that if our current understanding of the Big Bang came from a divine text "it would be treated as a preposterous myth." But, from its inception, the Big Bang idea has had the character of scientific *theory* based on empirical observation. If the idea was not supported by a tremendous amount of data or was not stated in a form susceptible, in principle, to disproof—again by empirical observation—then the idea would deserve to be treated as a myth, or an article of faith, or something other than a scientific theory.

PAUL J. TANENBAUM
Bel Air, Maryland

Mark my words

To the editors:
I am grateful that THE NEW REPUBLIC dedicated seven pages to a review of my recent book, *Titian's Women*, and pleased that the reviewer, Anne Hollander, describes it as a "learned and serious study" ("Venus in Venice," October 5). To be sure, I have never been accused of prudery before, as Hollander charges in the same paragraph, but I don't much object to this accusation, which has been reassuring to some of my older relatives. What I do object to in Hollander's review is the way in which she presents information about Titian's paintings as though the observations and knowledge were her own and not derived from my book. This is the case throughout the review—in the discussion of the setting of the Venus of Urbino, for example, and her relationship to the beholder; or in the account of paintings of Venus with a musician, whom the goddess ignores; or in the description of Tarquin's disheveled clothing and deranged appearance in the "Rape of Lucretia." The same can be said about Hollander's discussions of *disegno* and *colorito*, of Titian's *poesie*, and of the *paragone* (rivalry) of the arts and the rivalry of Titian and Michelangelo—all this information comes from *Titian's Women*. Indeed, even the last paragraph of Hollander's review, recounting Aretino's anecdote about Titian's liking for women and his uninterest in brothels, comes from *Titian's Women*—page one. It seems to me that Hollander has internalized so much of *Titian's Women* that she has presented its ideas as her own, often paraphrasing my text with little, if any, alteration. If imitation is the highest form of flattery, I should be delighted with her review. But its hostile tone not only deprives me of any such satisfaction; it misleads your readers, doing a disservice both to them and to my work.

RONA GOFFEN
New Brunswick, New Jersey

Anne Hollander replies:
Professor Goffen is being silly. She must be aware that hers is not the only book ever written on Titian and that others besides herself have had access to many of her sources. Much of the subject matter she is being proprietary about—the *paragone*, the *poesie*, *disegno* and *colorito*, Michelangelo vs. Titian, the settings and qualities of the various Venuses—have been regularly discussed among genera-

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tions of Italian Renaissance art historians. Also accessible, of course, have been Titian's paintings, wherein the attentiveness or indifference of Venus, along with Tarquin's mussed clothes and like details in other works, have been regularly pondered by all whose eye they have seized. As was clear in my review, I learned a great deal from Professor Goffen's book, but I did read much of it with certain recognition.

Gender politics

To the editors:

There is neither mystery nor contradiction in the feminists' view of sexual harassment ("School of Scandal," by Margaret Talbot, October 12). Regardless of what it started out to be, sexual harassment is now a political weapon. And, like all political weapons, it is used against one's enemies (i.e., those who behave and think in ways contrary to what one might like) and is not used against one's friends (those who behave and think the right way). And the bright spot in all of this is that it shows that women are really very much like men after all.

DAVID L. MOLNAR
San Diego, California

To the editors:

I would like to add my name to the legion of supposed feminist hypocrites. But let me be clear: I do not consider indifference to most of Clinton's sexual exploits to be hypocrisy. Rather, indifference is the only appropriate feminist stand. Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky, and Hillary Rodham Clinton are all adults, and, regardless of our beliefs as to the quality of Clinton and Lewinsky's management of their private lives, it really isn't our business as long as our involvement is not solicited by one of the three parties. This affair differs from those surrounding Bob Packwood and Clarence Thomas in that it was consensual. Even having a retrospective opportunity, Lewinsky has not claimed that the relationship she had with the president was nonconsensual. It is inconsistent with feminism to argue that Lewinsky is too stupid or immature a girl to know when she has been harassed, and it is ridiculous to argue that Hillary Clinton needs us to discipline Bill for his infidelity.

BARBARA HAAS MARGOLIUS
Shaker Heights, Ohio

To the editors:

Margaret Talbot's argument missed the point by a mile. Feminist organizations have always had a political agenda and have always looked the other way for those politicians embracing that agenda. Whether it is Bill Clinton, Gary Hart, Barney Frank, or Gerry Studds, feminists have been at the ready to endorse the most boorish behavior because the perpetrators have chosen politically correct positions.

BILL KELLY
Northfield, Minnesota

No nukes

To the editors:

Nuclear proliferation is the preeminent threat to the safety of the world ("Policy Bomb," October 19). Preventing the building of nuclear weapons requires indefatigable vigilance, vigilance which is simply impossible when the chief executive officer of the United States is incapable or unwilling to maintain the required effort. The Clinton scandal makes free and open policy inquiry impossible, just as it preoccupies the key actors in the drama. Several years from now, when there are catastrophic consequences from our lack of serious implementation of nonproliferation strategies, wise heads will note that the cause was the terrible distraction caused by both the president's selfish and irresponsible behavior and the irresponsible all-encompassing pursuit of that behavior by the press and our political representatives in the second term of the Clinton administration.

RICHARD E. VATZ
Towson, Maryland

Counterrevolutionary

To the editors:

Dana Milbank may be prescient in the assumption that Bill Clinton's *Darkness at Noon* analogy really was the creation of Sid Blumenthal ("Sid's Id," October 12). Koestler's main character, Rubashov, was a devoted Communist who helped build the system that had been hijacked by the cult of personality that was Stalinism. He believed history was on their side, and he came to believe that scapegoats had to be sacrificed to prevent counterrevolution. This led Rubashov to confess to crimes he had not committed at a show trial and to be summarily executed.

Bill Clinton is no Rubashov. He will not sacrifice himself for anyone—not his family, not the nation. The real Rubashovs are people like Webster Hubbell, Betty Currie, and, yes, Sidney Blumenthal, who willingly sacrifice themselves in the belief that keeping Bill Clinton in office is for the commonweal. They just haven't wised up to the fact that their sacrifices are not to history or the nation, but to a cult of personality.

MICHAEL COLLINS
Annapolis, Maryland

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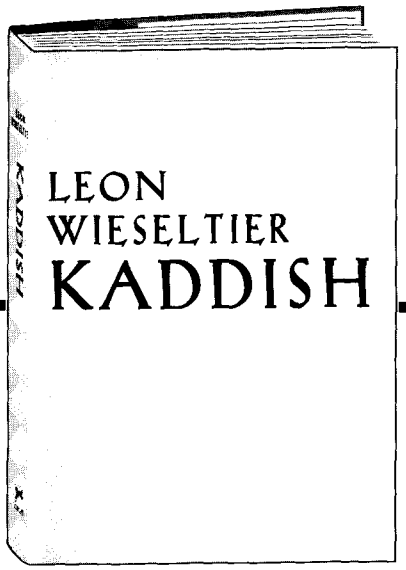

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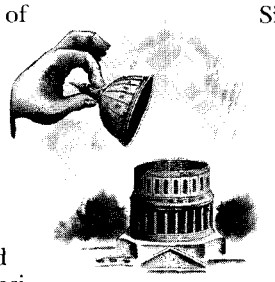
FROM WASHINGTON

Money laundering

Everywhere in America this November 3, voters will have the opportunity to pick the candidates of their choice. But only in Massachusetts and Arizona will they also have a chance to disinfect democracy itself—to rid politics of the corrupting influence of money. In each state, a "clean elections" referendum proposes to create a new system of campaign finance—one in which all state candidates who voluntarily accept spending limits and other regulations on their campaigns would receive, in return, public subsidies from a state "clean elections fund." There'd be less special interest cash, fewer invulnerable incumbents, and no more round-the-clock fundraising. Both measures are likely to pass—after all, who could question such a pristine idea?



Well, I'm skeptical. Maybe the new laws will wipe out corruption once and for all. Or maybe they will illustrate why the noble impulse to eliminate even the appearance of corruption can be at odds with other important values of our democracy, most notably freedom of expression.

The Supreme Court's complex 1976 decision in *Buckley* v. *Valeo* established the rule that campaign spending is a form of political speech and, therefore, cannot be regulated by the government. Intensely controversial, this holding makes intuitive sense. In a modern society, it costs money to get your message out. And, in a free society, you should be able to get your message out as loud and as often as you want. Therefore, in a modern, free society, the government shouldn't be allowed to tell any politician or independent organization how much to spend on political advertising.

The only exception to *Buckley*'s rule was that candidates could accede to spending limits as a condition for getting government subsidies—a caveat this year's initiatives are tailored to exploit. But just how "voluntary" would candidates' choices really be under these proposed new systems? In Massachusetts, if one candidate opts out of the publicly subsidized system and raises more money than his opponent, the state would give that opponent a direct subsidy to offset the difference. In Arizona, "nonparticipating" candidates would be penalized in a different way. The current limit on individual contributions would be lowered by 20 percent for them. It will be interesting to see if this coercive provision survives a court challenge.

More generally, the proposed laws symbolically stack the deck. Calling the public kitty a "clean elections fund" implies an official state view that money *from anywhere else is "dirty."* But what if a candidate raised every dollar from concerned members of the Sierra Club and the AFL-CIO? Or his own neighbors and extended family?

In Arizona, funds for the new systems are supposed to come partly from $100 fees levied on every lobbyist who represents a for-profit interest—which sounds an awful lot like paying for politics by taxing the people's right to petition the government. In each state, taxpayers would have the option to earmark a portion of their state income taxes for the clean elections fund. This is supposed to guarantee that no person will end up subsidizing, via his tax dollars, a political cause he doesn't support. But, of course, the state revenue diverted to the campaign finance fund by a tax-return check-off would have to come from somewhere else, either in the form of a budget cut or a tax increase. The point isn't that public financing of elections would bankrupt either state but that the reform itself could use a bit more truth-in-labeling.

The Massachusetts and Arizona initiatives follow on the heels of the failure of the Shays-Meehan bill in Congress this fall. Even in its final, watered-down form, this bill would have regulated independent expenditures for "express advocacy" ads that benefit a particular candidate—say, a 30-second spot paid for by the AFL-CIO that calls Senator Al D'Amato a menace to Social Security without ever using the words "vote for Chuck Schumer." Shays-Meehan would have controlled "express advocacy" by defining it to include any "words that in context can have no reasonable mean-

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

NOVEMBER 16, 1998

A PIECE OF PEACE

It must be the most melodramatically produced memorandum in history. For that is all that the nine days at the Wye Plantation in Maryland produced: a memorandum that reads like the work of sleepless politicians and wakeful lawyers, in which technicalities have overwhelmed philosophies. The disparity between the text and the reception of the text was even more marked at the signing ceremony at the White House, where the achievement of these modalities and instrumentalities was presented with high historical pomp. And yet the pomp was not misplaced. What begins in philosophies often ends in technicalities, if there is a sense of moral responsibility. Something very significant was accomplished amid all the leaking and the sulking at Wye, and the failure to have accomplished it would have been a mistake of historical moment.

The significant technicalities are, briefly, these. Israel agreed to two further redeployments of its troops, which will put the Palestinians in full or partial control of 40 percent of the West Bank. (They will fully control 18 percent, which should not qualify as an Israeli nightmare.) Israel will release 750 Palestinians from its jails, but no Palestinians who were convicted of political killings. The Palestinian National Authority will arrest 30 Palestinians wanted by the Israelis for murder; and reduce its police force of 40,000 by a quarter, in compliance with previously agreed limits; and repudiate 26 provisions of the Palestinian National Covenant (26!) that call for the destruction of Israel. (This will be done at a full meeting of the Palestinian National Council in Gaza, which President Clinton will address.) The new security regime—that is to say, the new and detailed commitment of the Palestinian National Authority to "zero tolerance for terror," including the prohibition of illegal weapons—will be monitored by "a U.S.-Palestinian committee" that will meet biweekly to review the steps taken against terrorist cells and terrorist infrastructure and the legal issues raised by the promised scrupulousness. The CIA will act as the arbiter and the abettor of progress in the envisaged war against terrorism.

All of these provisions are corollaries and embellishments of the Oslo accords, and they represent the agreement of the Israelis and the Palestinians to an American plan that was proposed in January. All of them, more importantly, have still to be implemented; and in this part of the world, implementation is the bane of history. Also the danger of political violence in the wake of the Wye accords is considerable. Progress toward peace has a way of breathing life into the "military" wing of Hamas, which has a way of breathing life into some of the armed extremists among the Jewish settlers. (An Israeli and a Palestinian were murdered a few days after the deal, in precisely such a ghastly rejectionist loop.) And, if all this is not enough to temper hope with dread, it was also agreed that negotiations on the "final status" issues, which are the thorniest and most inflamed issues of the conflict, are to begin immediately.

And yet there are grounds for cheer. At Wye, the Rabin-Arafat experiment in reconciliation became the Netanyahu-Arafat experiment in reconciliation. It has always been hard to measure the precise proportions of chauvinism and pragmatism in Benjamin Netanyahu. In the peace process until now he has behaved grudgingly, like a man trapped in a bitter inheritance. At the White House, however, he spoke ungrudgingly of "our Palestinian partners," and, in a phrase that nicely captured the mottled optimism of the moment, he said that he was "brimming with some confidence." He has established himself, once and for all, as the Likud leader who transcended the Likud's article of faith that land cannot be traded for peace. At Wye, land was traded for peace, or for the possibility of peace, and Ariel Sharon was in the room, too. The toughness of the Israeli government in its dealings with the Palestinians cannot be imputed to the intoxications of ideology or the inhibitions of politics. Quite the contrary. These men of the Israeli right are behaving only like sober men charged with the physical safety of their state. And they are making deals that are sure to alienate their supporters. (They tried to exploit the occasion to spring Jonathan Pollard, the American traitor who poses as a Jewish hero, but when they failed, they didn't walk.) They know that they find themselves on a path that will lead to a Palestinian state in much of the West Bank and all of Gaza, and still they are proceeding along it.

Meanwhile, Yasir Arafat is playing the role that he has played throughout this process: waiting to have the Americans deliver the Israelis so that he can busy himself instead with the authoritarian management of the

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somewhat unmanageable Palestinian entity. He is almost bizarrely lacking in magnitude. He speaks legalistically, and watches his flanks, and strains to see how much he can get for how little. *This time* will he act like a leader and throw caution to the winds and do the one thing and the only thing that his "cousins" really require of him, which is that he crack down on the killers in his polity? The point is not a few less bombs for a few more square miles. The point is no more bombs or no more square miles. Of course, Arafat cannot promise no more bombs. Yet the Palestinian ultras who have terrorized Israel are not exactly pariahs in Palestine, and the authorities in Palestine have not been very much of a wrench in their miserable works. But either this will stop or Oslo will stop. This is not merely a matter of "counterterrorism"; it is a matter of the most fundamental moral and historical accountability. Arafat may be accustomed to living dangerously, but he had better understand that there is no peace where there is no security. Peace is not a lull or a respite. It is a wholly new dispensation.

We would like to think that the American government has insisted upon these elementary propositions in its dealings with Arafat, but we worry that some of our diplomats cannot see the Palestinians as anything much more than victims; and one does not expect agency of victims. Still, the forward movement at Wye, unlike the forward movement at Oslo, would not have taken place without the intervention of the Clinton administration, which has made an extraordinary American commitment with its plan to insert the CIA into the counterterrorism machinery. This will almost certainly become a world-historical headache, as Americans find themselves regularly arbitrating between Israeli demands and Palestinian denials. But it is a job that has to be done, and only the United States can do it. Interventionism is in the details, and the administration has rightly plunged into them.

The road from Wye will be even more strenuous than the road to Wye. The king of Jordan, a figure so noble he seems almost archaic, will not live forever; the parties were lucky that they could still fly his conscience to Maryland. And the "final status" issues—the boundaries of Israel and Palestine, Jerusalem, the Palestinian "right of return," Jewish settlements, water rights, and so on—are the most harrowing issues of all. The peace process is about to enter its most unsentimental phase. It will be the duty of the Israeli government, in this last phase, to drive as hard a bargain as the prospect of peace can sustain. We hope that the American government understands this. We hope that the Palestinians understand this, too. For, at the end of this ordeal, they will finally have their state; and if it is a smaller state than the state of which they have dreamed, they will have mainly themselves to blame, and their years of refusing the part because they were dreaming of the whole. The people of Israel are surely the most disabused people that ever made peace. Yet the peace will be the stronger for their lack of illusions. It is far too late in the history of this conflict to pretend that peace is not also the fruit of power. •

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

REAL PEOPLE

By Dana Milbank

DES MOINES, IOWA

Let us suppose you are driving to Dairy Queen for a chocolate sundae. The procedure is simple enough: You park your car, place your order, and eat your ice cream. But now let us suppose you are Al Gore. Here is how you procure the dessert:

You direct your 29-vehicle motorcade—two armored limousines, six vans, seven sedans, a dozen motorcycles, an ambulance, and a helicopter—to take you to the Dairy Queen. All 85 members of your entourage, including a bomb-sniffing dog and the man who carries the codes to launch nuclear missiles, descend on the ice cream shop. Police stop traffic, and security agents scurry about, speaking into microphones in their sleeves. As four photographers vie for position, you stroll to the counter to order your Chocolate Rock. You then sit down and pretend not to notice that everybody in the place is staring at you.

That, at any rate, is what happened last week while I was traveling with the vice president. Like his boss, Gore lives in a security bubble, isolated from the daily human interactions the rest of us have on the subway, at the mall, or in a bar. Gore hasn't seen a hotel lobby in six years; he's whisked through kitchens, freight elevators, and windowless corridors leading to trash compactors. He's allowed to drive once a year, when he picks up the family Christmas tree.

But, true to form, Gore has found a methodical way to pierce his isolation. The vice president has assembled a group of what his advisers call his "real people," a collection of several dozen normal Americans he visits regularly just to chew the fat. The group is Gore's Joe Average board of advisers, a council of the common man—the equivalent, you might say, of Phil Gramm's Dicky Flatt. He meets with these people when he travels, brings them to Washington, and calls them on the phone, sometimes retelling their stories on the stump.

To some, this may seem contrived and artificial coming from a man who lived in a bubble long before the Secret Service required him to—a man who, unlike his boss, lacks an innate feel for the common man. (As a senator's son, Gore was reared in a luxury hotel and a prep school far from the masses.) On the other hand, at least his motives seem genuine. The real people are not a focus group (there is nothing representative about them), and they don't exist primarily for p.r. value (the sessions are private). Gore says his real-people sessions

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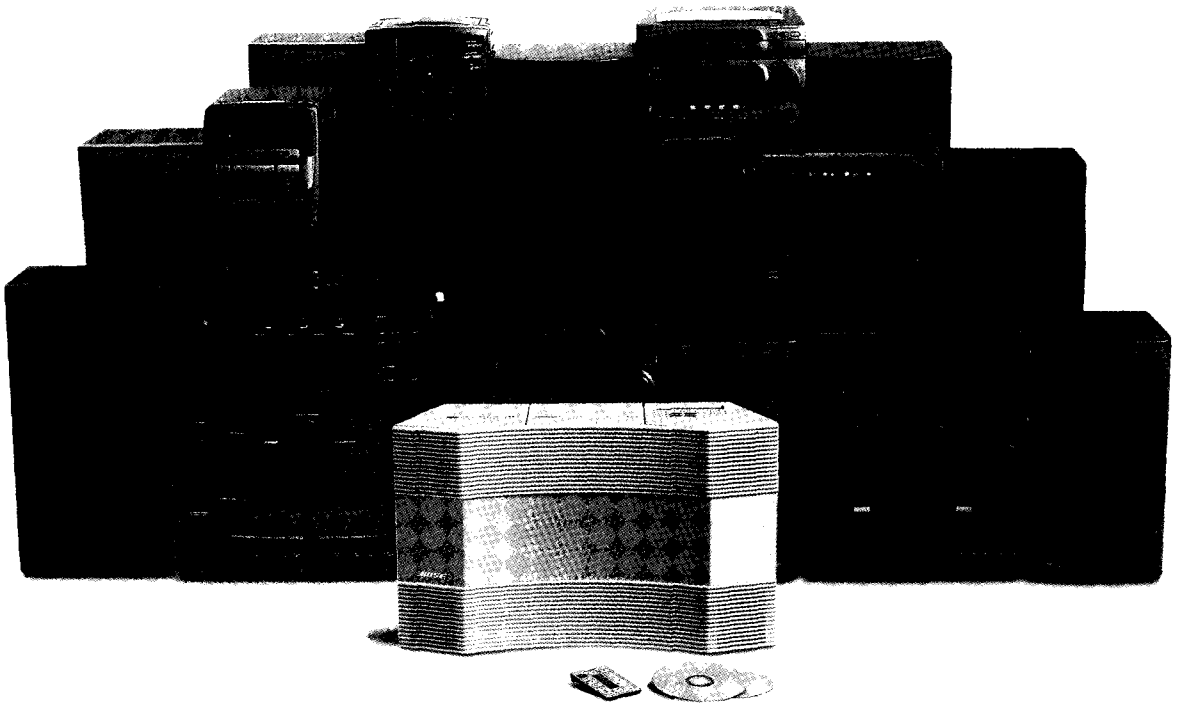

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are a revival of the 3,000 town meetings he hosted in Tennessee when he was in Congress, "often in small general stores in remote crossroads communities." Gore, in his quest for what he calls "the human dimension," has abandoned the general-store spontaneity for closed-door meetings and scripted public forums, but with the same purpose. "It's one of the best parts of my job," Gore says.

I sat in on a real-people session in the veep's West Wing office a couple of weeks ago. There were eight specimens assembled in wingback chairs and couches, most of them real people Gore had met at school-safety forums around the country. Gore, dipping a tea bag into a cup of hot water, had no particular agenda. They talked about Tipper's running injury, complained about the "gruesome" fare on cable television, reminisced about the Mickey Mouse Club, and lamented the decline of after-school activities. Gore recalled his time in the glee club and his fondness for his art teacher. He only wished, he told them, that he'd learned to play a musical instrument when he had been young. Gore held a serious pose, chin in hand, occasionally leaning forward in his chair and arching his eyebrows or closing his eyes to slits and unleashing a toothy smile.

Gore's foreign affairs adviser and other top staffers were waiting outside the room, and the vice president's secretary kept buzzing him. But Gore let the conversation ramble on for three-quarters of an hour. Affairs of state could wait; Gore seemed to be genuinely savoring the small talk. "You ever watch the Power Rangers?" he asked a fidgety young boy seated with his parents. But the boy wouldn't be distracted from his hand-held video game. When Gore finally ended the meeting, one of the real people rose to deliver an impromptu testimonial. "You're not plastic," she said, sounding a bit surprised at her discovery.

The real people come from all walks of life. One of the regulars is Joann Crowder, a former welfare recipient in Detroit who is now a supervisor in a car-parts company. She describes Gore, whom she has met three times, as "my old friend Al." He met her in 1996 and mentioned her in a debate. He visited her again on a Detroit trip in 1997 and this spring invited her to another meeting in Detroit. They talk about everything from Red Wings hockey to her children's health insurance. Crowder is smitten. "You can tell he's a down-home country boy," she says. That is a distinction shared by very few former members of the St. Albans Glee Club.

Another real person—albeit a high-profile one—is Joan Brown Campbell, now general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Gore met her ten years ago, and they speak monthly. "He and I speak the faith language," Campbell says. She helps Gore and his speechwriters find verses of scripture to cite. The two also talk about the environment, civil rights, and the Middle East. Gore even invited her to a meeting about the possibility of life on Mars. "I've been amazed at his capacity to stay connected to people who aren't politically necessary to him," she says.

Of course, there *is* a political necessity in Gore's relationships with Campbell, Crowder, and the rest. He uses them not just to overcome his isolation but to put to rest any lingering concerns about his wooden image as he prepares for the 2000 campaign. In that sense, the real people are part of a broader effort to turn Analytical Al into Gregarious Gore, giving him real-life anecdotes to liven his speeches. Another source of these stories for Gore is something his staff calls the "reverse town-hall meeting." Invented last year, this format has become a staple of the Gore road show. Instead of a free-wheeling, Clinton-style town meeting, Gore does most of the talking, working with a stack of note cards referring him to various people who have been planted in the audience.

The meetings are essentially infomercials, but local TV stations carry them live; and they provide Gore with a constantly replenished source of real-people stories. Last week in Davenport, Iowa, for example, Gore hosted a forum on school modernization during which a principal talked about the rope-and-pulley system needed to get equipment to the old school's sixth floor. Gore called aside the janitor after the session to elaborate. That afternoon in Cedar Rapids, Gore told the story about the rope and pulley, adding a new part about the janitor's complaints of back pain. At the next stop, Gore again talked about the janitor with the bad back—this time adding that the janitor wanted a Democratic Congress so he could get a higher minimum wage. I half-expected to learn at the next speech that the janitor had been denied treatment by his HMO.

The reverse town-hall meetings, like the real-people sessions, are a bit unnatural. Throughout the meetings, Gore checks his note cards, then asks, "I wonder if there's anybody here...." Just such a person invariably rises. Last week in Davenport, the vice president was briefly flummoxed when one of the plants in the audience was slow to respond to his cue. "I was beginning to get worried," Gore said after the man rose. "Nobody was standing up."

The vice president still sometimes has trouble escaping his caste. Gore opened a recent union-hall rally in Illinois by saying: "Within three to four years we are going to have completed the Human Genome Project." More than once I've heard him plunge into a discussion of Moore's Law before a crowd that didn't seem to want to hear about it.

But Gore, indisputably, is developing more of a common touch—the main reason behind his improved performance on the stump this fall. Stories collected from his town-hall forums and real-people meetings form the core of his campaign speech. He inevitably recounts what aides call "The Dead Man Story" about a man who was resuscitated after his heart had stopped, but whose HMO wouldn't pay the bill, saying it wasn't an emergency. "The man was dead," Gore bellows, as the crowd roars.

Is Prince Albert becoming a commoner? Don't count

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on it, but he sure sounded convincing in East Los Angeles last week at a get-out-the-vote rally of Latino union members. Gore was pumping his fists in the air, chanting "*sí se puede*" ("yes we can") without looking self-conscious. Finding a number of waiters and waitresses in the crowd, he shouted, "People don't realize the same hands serving their food will also pick the next governor of California!" There was no talk of Moore's Law that afternoon, no mention of the genome, nothing about reinventing government. It was just Ordinary Al, and, for a moment, he sounded like a real person himself. •

A better way to punish Clinton.

FACE THE MUSIC

By Donald Schapiro and Robert A. Schapiro

Most Americans want the Clinton scandal to end soon but are conflicted about how to bring that about. There seem to be only two possibilities, both unsatisfactory: removal of President Clinton from office by impeachment or resignation, or censure by Congress, possibly with a fine.

Removal seems wrong because a substantial majority of the electorate approves of Clinton's job performance. Thus his impeachment—or forced resignation—would punish not just him but the nation. Nor is it clear that Clinton's alleged crimes constitute the kinds of abuse of power that rise to the level of impeachable offenses. Yet censure does not seem a sufficient reaction to possible perjury and obstruction of justice. A vote of censure by Congress would add little tarnish to the president's already-tarnished reputation.

There is, however, a third option: Clinton could voluntarily subject himself to the risk of a criminal prosecution based on the charges in the Starr report—but only after his term is over.

Of course, a future criminal prosecution is a possibility in any case. While most legal scholars hold that the president cannot be indicted while in office, after he leaves he can be tried for acts committed during his presidency. If the president were impeached or if he resigned in the face of impeachment, then-President Gore might pardon him, following the precedent of Gerald Ford's pardon of Richard Nixon. That might serve justice in that removal would be punishment enough for whatever improprieties and crimes the president might have committed.

But, if the president is merely censured and remains in office, the question of exposure to criminal prosecution remains open. And, if the proper remedy for criminal conduct lies in the criminal justice system, allowing a censured president to remain in office, subject to future criminal prosecution, would permit the vindication of two crucial principles: the rule of law and government by democratically elected leaders.

We recommend a three-step approach. First, Clinton would waive the statute of limitations on any potential charges against him, along with any objections based on the speedy-trial clause of the Bill of Rights. Second, Clinton would agree not to accept a pardon from any successor. And, for good measure, Gore would promise that, if he's elected in 2000, he would not pardon Clinton.

Such a path is not without precedent. When confronted with substantial evidence of their wrongdoing, the targets of criminal probes sometimes seek to extend the statute of limitations to allow the prosecutor more time to decide whether to obtain an indictment. They may hope that exculpatory evidence will be found, or that, on reflection, the prosecutor will ultimately decide not to indict. Similarly, for President Clinton, postponing matters to his post-White House future might be preferable to a congressional vote on impeachment.

If the president follows this course and Congress approves it as part of its vote of censure, the president will have redeemed his right to govern by agreeing to face the consequences of his actions, and Congress will have carried out its constitutional duty and moved on to its legislative ones.

And, while in general it is undesirable to postpone criminal trials, the option we're suggesting would not establish any uncomfortable new precedents. If, in the future, a president were to commit a crime of violence, such as murder, it would likely be met with impeachment first and a criminal trial immediately thereafter. Similarly, if the actions of the president were clearly contrary to the national interest without, however, involving a crime, there could be an impeachment without any criminal trial.

One advantage to our proposal is that the questions of whether the president would be indicted and how he would be tried would fall not to Kenneth Starr but to the Department of Justice, after a new administration takes over in 2001. With the multiplication of criminal laws comes the increasing importance of prosecutorial discretion, and Clinton might be entitled to avoid criminal charges based on the exercise of such discretion. Lying in a civil deposition rarely gives rise to criminal charges. Starr, however, is in no position to exercise discretion. The independent counsel statute promotes insulation over accountability, but discretion and insulation make odd bedfellows. Those who make key prosecutorial judgments must exercise their discretion subject to the review of a higher political or electoral authority.

In offering himself up to criminal prosecution, Clinton would also be taking a major step toward redemption. The president who is sworn to uphold the laws should be prepared to subject himself to these laws. And to believe that Clinton would "suffer enough" by a vote of

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censure is to contend that, after elevation to a high place in a free society, one can atone for breaking the law by accepting criticism without so much as losing one's job. Accepting responsibility by offering to "face the music" after his term is over could restore Clinton to his leadership role. Both he and the nation would benefit. His lack of truthfulness would have caused his censure, and his further punishment, if any, would fit his crime, if any.

DONALD SCHAPIRO practices law in New York and has been a visiting lecturer at Yale Law School. ROBERT A. SCHAPIRO is an associate professor at Emory Law School.

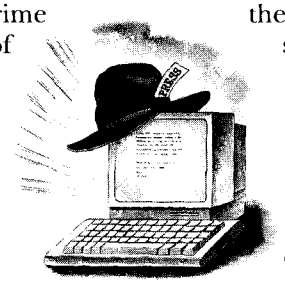
JERUSALEM DISPATCH

POLL WATCHER

By Hirsh Goodman

If Israelis have learned anything in the two-plus years of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's term, it has been never to expect the obvious. A dozen or so times the pundits have declared him dead. Each time he has resurfaced stronger than before, and there's no reason his apparent political predicament after signing the Wye memorandum with Yasir Arafat should be any different.

Yes, on the face of it, things do not look good for Bibi. He has but a majority of one in the 120-member Knesset, and the National Religious Party is threatening to bolt the governing coalition if the prime minister goes through with the provisions of Wye that call for Israel to give up another 13 percent of the West Bank to the Palestinians. Together, right-wing factions dedicated to the preservation of a Greater Israel could muster 17 to 20 votes against the prime minister if a no-confidence motion were to come up.



In addition to his coalition problems, Netanyahu faces opposition within his own party. At least three key Likud ministers say they will not vote to ratify Wye, although they may be content merely to abstain. To make matters worse, a bill calling for early elections has passed the Knesset Law Committee; the full House is likely to consider it within the next two weeks. Members of the ultra-Orthodox Habad group, so central to Netanyahu's 1996 election victory, have stated openly that they feel betrayed by his handover of land, which they say is contrary to a written promise he made to them. They have withdrawn their support, even though they realize a likely consequence is an ascendant left.

Habad is a threat to be taken seriously, since it has the ability to turn out tens of thousands of voters on command. Given that Netanyahu won the last election by fewer than 30,000 votes, the Hasidic movement's position could be critical to victory. As for the main opposition, the Labor Party, it will support Netanyahu as long as he makes peace. If he falters in implementing Wye, the party will vote with the right for early elections.

None of the above comes as a surprise to Netanyahu, who has shown an uncanny ability to read the political map better than his rivals and better than most of his predecessors. Indeed, he has already taken the necessary precautions—like appointing Ariel Sharon, a legendary hawk, as his foreign minister and naming him chairman of the committee responsible for implementing the accords. With Sharon's blessing on the agreement, Netanyahu knew he could stymie those who questioned either his security judgment or his nationalism.

Of course, the very existence of such questions begs another: Why did Netanyahu go for this agreement at all? After all, recent Palestinian terror—ten incidents in the past 60 days—would have given him a plausible, indeed, legitimate reason to stall on further territorial givebacks, even in the face of American pressure to push ahead with the process. Doing so might even have enhanced his stature in Israel as a man who is serious about his commitment to no peace without full security.

But he never did any of this, and the reason is quite simple: all the polls, including the ones conducted by his own pollsters, indicate that between 75 and 84 percent of Israelis want the peace process to continue. With early elections a real possibility, unprecedented unemployment mounting, and a budget battle on the horizon, the road to Wye was the only one Netanyahu could take. To beat Ehud Barak of the Labor Party in the next election, Netanyahu must position himself as a centrist, for that is clearly where a vast majority of Israelis are. The right might be vocal, and their votes could tip the balance. But the key to victory is the center.

If there are, indeed, early elections, they could take place as soon as mid-March, more than a year ahead of schedule. Ostensibly, Netanyahu is doing everything he can to prevent them. But the truth is he is not intimidated by the prospect. Ehud Barak's star continues to fade; the Labor leader is unable to get his party or the public behind him. Labor infighting, with Shimon Peres leading the anti-Barak faction, continues to weaken the party and to distract it from election preparations. And, while Habad and the right wing might not vote for Netanyahu, it is a safe bet that they won't vote for Labor, either.

Indeed, early elections would give Netanyahu some clear advantages. Should they be called, there is a three-month period during which the incumbent government takes on a caretaker function until a new Cabinet is formed. As chief caretaker, Netanyahu could legiti-

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mately argue that he is not in a position to make life-and-death decisions for the country, freeze the Wye process, and thus spare himself much strife with the right. Also, if elections are held in March, those within his own party who were planning to challenge him in 2000—people like Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert—will find themselves with little time to prepare.

From every point of view, then, an early election hardly threatens Netanyahu—it strengthens him. He could blame the collapse of the peace process on the left, thus enhancing his credibility with the center. He could avoid confrontation with the right, and he could keep his relations with the Americans and the Arab world on track. He could argue that he had every good intention of bringing us peace in our time but fell victim to Israel's political system and his opponents, whose lust for power exceeded their love of country. One thing we don't have to worry about, after all, is whether Netanyahu will find a way to explain himself. He is a master of the art.

Early elections or no, don't hold your breath waiting for the Wye accords to be implemented in the 90 days allotted for the process. Under the terms of the agreement, the Israelis must execute their phased handover of territory only after the Palestinians have complied with security requirements and other such conditions. Knowing Netanyahu and some of those around him, the ambiguity of the language in these passages is no accident, for it gives the Israelis both leverage and freedom while, at the same time, placing the onus for failure on the Palestinians.

For example, Israel must hand over territory only after the Palestinians present a security plan that will eliminate terror. The elimination of terror, of course, is a relative term. Security can always be breached, as we have seen in recent days. And, as President Clinton pointed out at the signing ceremony, it is almost certain that the forces opposed to peace will resort to terror—all the more so now because they know it could undermine the agreement.

In the Wye agreement, the Palestinians agreed to rescind those clauses of the Palestinian Charter that call for the destruction of Israel. But the document is ambiguous when it comes to the question of which representative body should carry out that mandate. Israel insists the Palestinian National Council must do it; the agreement speaks of the PLO's Executive Committee and the Palestinian Central Council. The agreement conditions further withdrawal on the Palestinians' confiscating illegal weapons, but by what yardstick does one measure a genuine effort to do so? Israel is demanding a reduction in the size of the Palestinian police force; the agreement mentions only that the Palestinians must provide Israel with a list of police. And so on.

The only way for Netanyahu to practice his doctrine of peace with security is to move hesitantly on peace and to be adamant on security. Netanyahu has made a career of knocking the Oslo accords, which he essentially considers dangerous for Israel. The Wye agreement is not the result of his desires or hopes but was forced on him by an American administration that the prime minister both mistrusts and fears.

But, at the end of the day, neither fear of America nor the specter of future Arab-Israeli conflict will dictate Netanyahu's path. Domestic political considerations will determine his course, as they always have. The easiest way to divine the prime minister's likely intentions is to do precisely what he does: watch the polls.

HIRSH GOODMAN is vice chairman of *The Jerusalem Post* and founding editor of *The Jerusalem Report.*

The stealth peacemaker?

SHARON'S GAME

By Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Yaari

Just hours before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government officially announced the nomination of Ariel Sharon, the uncompromising old warhorse of the Israeli right, as foreign minister in early October, Sharon once again told the world that, in his new job, he would never shake hands with the "arch terrorist" Yasir Arafat. Yet, at the same time, Sharon quietly got word to Arafat that the Palestinians should not criticize his appointment, because he intended to do business with them. The Palestinians decided to heed the message—and held their fire.

At the Wye summit, a similar scenario unfolded. Shortly before a dinner hosted by President Clinton, at which Sharon was to meet Arafat face-to-face for the first time, Sharon again sent a message to Arafat. He still wouldn't shake hands, but this should be taken neither as a personal insult to Arafat nor as a signal that Sharon was out to sabotage an agreement. When Sharon entered, he nodded two or three times—those present cannot agree on the count—in the direction of Arafat, who half-saluted in return.

Indeed, all the way up to the East Room signing ceremony, Sharon made sure the Americans did not corner him into a situation where he had to accept or reject Arafat's extended hand. In a conversation with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Sharon even referred to the Palestinians as "gangsters," prompting her to ask what he was doing there if that was indeed what he thought. What he was doing was spending hours with Arafat's lieutenants, who later testified to his flexibility and seriousness in working out the details of the Israeli withdrawal from an additional 13 percent of the West Bank, something he had always previously denounced as a danger to the security of Israel.

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Now it is Foreign Minister Sharon who will be entrusted with the final status negotiations that will lead, one way or another, to the realization of Arafat's lifelong ambition: a Palestinian state. Indeed, upon his return to Israel from Wye, Sharon was already leading a campaign to sell the Wye deal to his own right-wing constituents, trying to dissuade his old friends in the West Bank settler lobby from assisting the Labor opposition in bringing down the government. Many of Sharon's longtime supporters now bitterly resent what they perceive to be a betrayal by their almost mythological hero.

The mellowing of Ariel Sharon has become one of the most fascinating subplots of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. For years, he has been the darling of the West Bank settlers, their strongest voice against territorial compromise within the councils of Likud. And, of course, it was Sharon who, as Menachem Begin's minister of defense, initiated the Israel Defense Force's pursuit of Arafat's troops deep into Lebanon in 1982. Indeed, Sharon ordered the blowing up of every bunker suspected of sheltering the PLO chief.

But that adventure ended in Sharon's ouster from the defense ministry and his partial banishment to the right-wing margins of Israeli politics. The Kahan Commission, established by Israel to investigate the massacre of Palestinians by Lebanese Christian militia at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, concluded that "responsibility is to be imputed to [Sharon] for having disregarded the prospects of acts of vengeance and bloodshed by the Phalangists against the population of the refugee camps" and demanded Sharon's immediate resignation or removal.

Yet it would be too simple to interpret Sharon's journey from the fiasco in Beirut to the agreement at Wye in purely ideological terms. He has neither converted to new principles nor betrayed old ones. Rather, Sharon's new role is the culmination of a carefully orchestrated comeback by a man for whom ideology has always been primarily of tactical importance.

Few Americans may be aware of it, but, a quarter of a century ago, Sharon, about to launch a small political party of his own, considered coming out in favor of a dialogue with the PLO. And it was Sharon who, as defense minister, personally supervised the demolition of the town of Yamit, the biggest settlement in the Sinai, in preparation for the handover of the Sinai to Egypt under the Camp David accords.

But, after Lebanon, Sharon's only choice was to embrace those who were willing to embrace him—the right-wing collection of settler activists and advocates of West Bank annexation. The groups at the far-right end of the Israeli political spectrum were somehow unable to spawn a truly charismatic leader of their own. None of the skullcap-wearing settler spokesmen ever reached the point of national recognition. Thus, they were desperate to enlist Sharon's military credentials and forceful personality to their cause. And, just as Greater Israel was crying for a powerful voice, Sharon was seeking a constituency. He adjusted to survival in the political hinterland: paying regular visits to rabbis with political influence, cultivating Yeshiva students, addressing crowds of ultra-Orthodox Jews who refused to serve in the army in which he made his name.

Buttressed by this constituency, Sharon worked his way back up to the top, serving as minister of housing and infrastructure in successive Likud governments. Yet Sharon never fully assimilated the ideological convictions of those he represented; he never internalized their agenda of zero compromise over territory. Indeed, he used to joke that he remained the only Laborite within the Likud—that is, a pragmatist not bound by doctrine.

And he never lost sight of his true goal: getting all the way back to the inner circles of power. Earlier this year, Sharon was spreading the word that he might run for prime minister against Netanyahu in the next elections, outflanking him from the right. It was not a serious threat, as even Sharon realized. But it did serve to remind Netanyahu that he cannot exclude Sharon from his inner Cabinet. In spite of Sharon's support for Netanyahu's election campaign against Shimon Peres in 1996, the young prime minister was well aware of Sharon's reputation for manipulation and undercutting his superiors, and of his total disdain for Netanyahu personally. Netanyahu tried to keep Sharon out of the Cabinet altogether but was obliged to bring him aboard under an ultimatum from David Levy, the veteran Likud politician who later resigned the post that Sharon has now taken.

In the end, there was remarkably little difficulty in the promotion of Sharon to foreign minister. Those Israeli politicians who have always felt he was unscrupulous and opportunistic went through the motions of denouncing him. His admirers were split between those who felt abandoned and those who trusted him to subvert the Oslo accords—even though throughout the whole exercise Sharon kept his lines open to the architect of Oslo, Peres, who is also the chief proponent of a national unity coalition between Labor and Likud.

Indeed, so far, the Sharon appointment has been a plus for Netanyahu. With Sharon as a partner in a new deal with the Palestinians, Netanyahu deprives anti-peace-process rightists of their natural leader. Sharon's presence also strengthens Netanyahu's hand in the Likud, where many harbor doubts about Netanyahu's capabilities and regard Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai as a too-moderate newcomer.

Still, Netanyahu is well aware that handling Sharon is no laughing matter. In 1982 Sharon carried out an extraordinary putsch, wresting control of the war from Begin by manipulating the flow of information between the army and the civilian echelons. Sharon has recently lost a libel suit in an Israeli court where he contested a claim that he had misled the prime minister at the time. The possibility of Sharon again shutting out the prime minister, this time in the context of peace talks, is always there. Netanyahu can never be sure whether Sharon is

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in power to help him or destroy him.

In evaluating Sharon's future course, it's useful to look at the evolution of his attitude toward Jordan. For years Sharon argued that "Jordan is Palestine." In other words, the Hashemite Kingdom should be transformed into a Palestinian state so that the West Bank can remain in Israel's hands. For more than a decade, Amman considered him an enemy. Yet, over the past two years, Sharon has managed to ingratiate himself with King Hussein, becoming the Likud leader with the best connections to the royal court. He made concessions to the Jordanians on water supply that no other member of the government would dare offer. Consequently it was the Jordanians who helped Sharon remove the reluctance of the United States to deal with him by arranging his first visit with national security adviser Sandy Berger. Sharon now says Israel must prevent a collapse of the Jordanian monarchy, the opposite of what he once preached.

Privately, too, he already accepts the concept of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. Yet his map calls for a system of enclaves on the West Bank separated by roads through which Israel would be able to speedily reinforce its defenses on the Jordan valley in case of danger from the east. This map constitutes the starting point for the pending final status negotiations. The Palestinians say this map cannot serve as a basis for discussions, but, having seen at Wye that Sharon is a serious bargainer, they are eager to know how far he is willing to go.

It is much too early for him to show his hand. Sharon realizes what role he is expected to play on the domestic scene, but he may not have a clear view of where negotiations may lead. This is exactly why he insists on not shaking Arafat's hand. It is not a message to the chairman alone but also to Netanyahu. For it was the prime minister who swore during his election campaign not to shake hands with Arafat but to leave the task to his foreign minister. Now the roles are reversed: it is the foreign minister who remains uncommitted.

One point is obvious: Sharon long ago reached the conclusion that any major decision in Israel should be based, if at all possible, on a broad coalition. This is a lesson of his Lebanon War, which became a debacle in part because it lacked the support of half of the Israeli public. The same happened to the Oslo accords, which faced strong opposition culminating in Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. Sharon yearns to stay in the center of the action rather than risk a return to the extreme edge. He senses that his job would become a little easier within a broader government in which he could be the link between Likud and Labor on the makings of final status. For now, he's on track. But it is also true that Sharon has always had good plans in the past, some of which he has managed to destroy single-handedly.

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The *Times* vs. history.

SPY STORIES

By Ronald Radosh, John Earl Haynes, and Harvey Klehr

Does anyone doubt, decades after the fact, that Senator Joseph McCarthy was a bully and a political opportunist? Why, then, did *The New York Times* take the unusual step of running a lead editorial on October 23 on "Revisionist McCarthyism," a historical issue 50 years old? Perhaps the editorial writers felt the need to comment on Ethan Bronner's October 18 lead article in the paper's Week In Review section, "Witching Hour: Rethinking McCarthyism, if Not McCarthy," which discussed our work on the McCarthy era and American communism. The editorial complained that "a number of American scholars"—the editorial mentioned no names—"[a]rmed with audacity and new archival information . . . would like to rewrite the historical verdict on Senator McCarthy and McCarthyism." The editorial conceded that there was more significant Communist infiltration of the U.S. government than McCarthy's critics have acknowledged but still implied that efforts to document the story are somehow illegitimate.

The *Times* editorial goes on to suggest that much of the recently published National Security Agency Venona intercepts and other new evidence of Soviet espionage is "opaque and ambiguous," even, perhaps, partly made up by Soviet field agents anxious to impress gullible superiors in Moscow. None of this evidence, the *Times* editors imply, should be allowed to stand in the way of the consensus that it was McCarthyism—much more so than any Soviet espionage or Communist infiltration of government—that "was a lethal threat to American democracy."

If Americans are ever going to understand their history, it is essential that McCarthyism and anti-communism be disentangled. We have no idea which "scholars" the *Times* had in mind. For our part, we, along with historians such as Allen Weinstein and Richard Gid Powers, have always argued for just such a distinction. We have insisted that McCarthy was a demagogue whose reckless, irresponsible charges slandered innocent people.

In *The Secret World of American Communism*, two of us stated that "[i]n McCarthy's hands, anticommunism was a partisan weapon used to implicate the New Deal, liberals, and the Democratic Party in treason. Using evidence that was exaggerated, distorted, and in some cases utterly false, [McCarthy] accused hundreds of individuals of Communist activity, recklessly mixing the innocent with the assuredly guilty when it served his political purposes." And, in *The Amerasia Spy Case*, two of us made the point that "precisely because Senator McCarthy was reck-

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less and made false charges, actual Communists who engaged in and contemplated espionage sought to claim the status of victims."

It is not so much that McCarthy exaggerated the threat of domestic communism as that he did not know what he was talking about. The people he accused of abetting the "conspiracy so immense"—for example, Dean Acheson and George C. Marshall—were not only major architects of the response to postwar Soviet expansionism but were themselves clear opponents of communism. McCarthy was simply incapable of identifying real Communists and spies, and he elided the differences among spies, Communists, fellow travelers, and liberals.

Let us be clear. There is simply no evidence in the Comintern or Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) archives in Moscow, or in the recently released decoded KGB cables, that supports the general charge by Joe McCarthy that the Roosevelt and Truman administrations were part of, or assisted, a Communist conspiracy. Nor is there evidence for his accusations against Marshall, Acheson, and Truman. Nor is there any evidence supporting McCarthy's charge that the old China hand Owen Lattimore was "the top [Soviet] espionage agent in the United States," much less Alger Hiss's "boss." Nor did McCarthy's allegations that China hand John Service was a spy prove to be accurate. Lattimore was a pro-Soviet fellow traveler who defended the Soviet purge trials, and Service foolishly got mixed up in an abortive espionage scheme—but neither were Communists or Soviet spies.

We'd venture two explanations for the editorial's false statement that scholars "would like to rewrite the historical verdict on Senator McCarthy." The simplest and most judicious is that the editors may not have read the new books, ours included. The editorial argues that the deciphered Venona KGB codes are perhaps "embellished" or perhaps not even "accurate at all." Were Soviet intelligence agents making up all of their reports? The KGB and GRU had elaborate procedures for recruiting agents and running them. Sources were frequently shifted from one control officer to another. Moscow headquarters sent requests for specific information that sources were expected to provide, and Moscow required that sources provide copies of documents or reports they wrote themselves: KGB officers could not get by with reporting only information delivered verbally. KGB officers were encouraged to complain to Moscow about deficiencies in their colleagues' activities or tradecraft. Lying about sources could not long go undetected or unpunished. Certainly there are ambiguities in the status of such persons as I.F. Stone and J. Robert Oppenheimer, for example. But, for the overwhelming majority of the Soviet spies identified in the cables, the evidence is unambiguous.

The second possibility is that *The New York Times* does not want to disentangle McCarthyism from anticommunism. To say that there was a significant issue of Soviet espionage in post-World War II America is not to vindicate McCarthy. Most Americans who spied for the Soviet Union, we now know, were members of the CPUSA. The organization even had an underground apparatus that cooperated closely with both the KGB and GRU—checking out prospective spies, providing safe houses, recruiting couriers, and supplying false passports. The head of this apparatus, Rudy Baker, met regularly with Earl Browder, the general secretary of the CPUSA. This did not mean that every American Communist was a Soviet agent. But the CPUSA was not just another American political party, operating according to the regularly established legal rules of political organizations. Its Soviet ties defined its very raison d'être, and those ties made it, as Sidney Hook argued at the time, in part a conspiracy and not a body of independent-minded heretics. Somehow, in the last several decades, a myth has grown that has erased the anti-Communist liberalism of that era from history. The myth's devotees insist that anyone who linked American Communists to Soviet espionage was a McCarthyite and that those accused of Soviet espionage were innocent victims of McCarthyite persecution. There were innocent victims of McCarthyism, but one bizarre feature of the myths that have developed is that persons who betrayed the United States and assisted Stalin's Soviet Union through espionage are portrayed as heroic victims.

Moreover, it is quite clear from new evidence that a number of guilty people escaped any punishment whatsoever—Ted Hall, a major atom bomb spy, is perhaps the most visible example. American intelligence unearthed information that more than 350 Americans had covert relationships with Soviet intelligence agencies in the 1940s. Only about *half* were ever identified, and no more than a dozen were ever successfully prosecuted. Soviet spies had infiltrated every significant agency of the U.S. government, ranging from the State and Treasury Departments to the Manhattan Project. High-ranking officials, including Harry Dexter White, assistant secretary of the Treasury; Laurence Duggan, chief of the State Department's division of American republics; and Lauchlin Currie, an administrative aide and State Department liaison to Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, gave secrets to Soviet agents. White even met with a Soviet agent while at the San Francisco conference establishing the United Nations, revealing to him the American negotiating position on a number of issues.

It has been nearly 50 years since McCarthy burst on the scene with his inaccurate list of Communists in the State Department. The combination of newly opened Soviet archives, newly opened FBI records, and newly released deciphered KGB messages allows us to reconstruct with far greater precision what actually happened: There were hundreds of Communist spies in the United States, and we now know who many of them were. What remains a mystery is why *The New York Times* would try to label the effort to tell an accurate, documented story of American communism and Soviet espionage an effort to rehabilitate Joe McCarthy.

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The closet in the locker room.

OUT OF BOUNDS

By Steve Kettmann

Green Bay Packers defensive end Reggie White did himself no favors last March when he stood before the Wisconsin state legislature and gave a rambling speech full of ethnic stereotyping and rants against the "rampant sin" of homosexuality. But, while White's remarks earned him all sorts of condemnations, they had an altogether different meaning within the world of professional sports.

It's something of an open secret that there are gay athletes in major league team sports—not just role players but stars who have set records, played on all-star teams, and earned millions in endorsements. Depending on whom you believe, on at least a few occasions some of these players have competed against Reggie White. But none of White's fellow NFL players—and, really, no athletes at all—rose up to condemn his speech. That's how far sports lags behind the rest of society when it comes to accepting homosexuality.

"There are several prominent athletes in team sports who, to the best of our knowledge, are gay," says Judy Wieder, editor-in-chief of the *Advocate*, a national gay and lesbian magazine. "We have to take the attitude that we can't know for sure until they tell us. But everything we know would tell us that." Wieder says she and her staff regularly check in with selected gay male athletes in the big U.S. team sports to see if they are ready to come out, as individual-sport stars like diver Greg Louganis, ice-skater Rudy Galindo, and tennis player Martina Navratilova have done. So far, the answer has been no.

And it's not hard to imagine why. A career in pro ball can survive cocaine abuse or even spousal abuse. But even a strong-willed athlete who declared himself gay might risk not only awkward stares and denunciations but also a hastily ended career. "Frankly, it would be easier for someone convicted of bank robbery to get a job in the NFL than an overtly gay player," says Leigh Steinberg, a big-time agent who was the real-life model for *Jerry Maguire*. According to a source with personal ties to one all-star, the athlete considered coming out but backed off, fearing that he would be shot during a game if the public knew.

"Eventually it will come out and be open," says Oakland A's left fielder Rickey Henderson, one of the few optimists when it comes to the topic of homosexuality in sports. "It's always tough for the first guy who makes a breakthrough. It might not happen in our generation, but we will see it happen. We will say: 'If you are a homosexual, you won't be penalized for it.' I know a few people who are that way. They're good people. That's just how they feel. There's nothing wrong with it."

But Henderson, who is straight, is more of a free-thinker than most ballplayers—and more tolerant than all but a few. Another person who has worked closely with professional sports teams in more than one league for the past two decades told me: "Even if you wanted to come out, you really couldn't because it's probably the most homophobic place there is. In some ways it shouldn't be that way because these are men who know they are men and shouldn't be insecure about it, but in some ways they are the most insecure about it."

This source described a difficult conversation he had with one star athlete, in which he told the athlete: "You should be able to be and say whoever you are."

"That's real easy for you to say," the athlete replied.

Gay athletes in big-time professional sports are stuck. Their safest option is to continue hiding who they are, living in a pressure cooker of lies and unspoken truths. This pressure boils over during competition, sometimes in ways the public will never know or understand.

"I think repression in anything leads to psychosis," says David Kopay, a former running back for the San Francisco 49ers, Washington Redskins, and other teams, who came out after his retirement in late 1975. "It doesn't lead to anything healthy, that's for sure. I was overcompensating, overworking, overachieving, because I didn't want to be found out. I felt like I was suffocating."

Kopay, 56, lives in Southern California now and works for his family's floor-covering business. He's not the activist some wish he was, and his brave decision did not open the gates to a flood of other football players. Kopay once thought that executives of the National Football League might approach him, using his experience as a resource to help understand their players. "I just don't understand their homophobia," Kopay told me. "I guess they feel you can't be manly and be gay, which is totally ridiculous." Kopay wants the NFL to take on White. But, although White has never retracted what he said about gays—the clarification he released in early April satisfied itself with a blanket statement that he did not mean to demean anyone—the league has stayed silent.

There have, of course, been ballplayers who were openly gay, but not during their playing days. Kopay was one. Another was Glenn Burke, a baseball player who found out firsthand how suspicions of homosexuality could tarnish a career. In the late '70s, when Burke played for the Los Angeles Dodgers, attitudes seemed to be changing, tolerance spreading. Not in baseball. Not according to Burke, anyway. "I was doing good," he told *L.A. Weekly* reporter David Davis just months before Burke's death from AIDS in 1995. "I was fitting in with the guys and was friends with some of them: Dusty [Baker], Lee Lacy, Steve Garvey, [Davey] Lopes. But [manager Tom] Lasorda found out I was gay, and then it was over." The Dodgers traded Burke to the Oakland A's for outfielder Billy North, a player on the decline. (Al Campanis, a Dodgers vice

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president at the time, told reporters Lasorda had nothing to do with the trade and denied that Dodgers officials even knew Burke was gay.)

Burke did not fare much better in Oakland than he had in Los Angeles. Sportswriters who covered him remember that he seemed distracted and distant. "In baseball you have to be relaxed and comfortable with yourself," Kopay said. "Glenn was anything but that." Burke did not get along well with fiery, opinionated manager Billy Martin and was released in 1980. "I heard Billy Martin say, 'I don't want no faggots playing for me,'" Burke told Davis. "That was it. I walked away. I thought I could have been a big-time player, but it was taken away for political discrimination."

Burke waited until he was out of baseball to be openly gay. Dusty Baker, who is now manager of the San Francisco Giants, wonders if any baseball player would come out now, given the clubhouse mentality that shuns any departure from what is seen as manly. Baker said players are even touchier since openly gay umpire Dave Pallone published his book *Behind the Mask: My Double Life in Baseball* a few years back.

"We're so much into being macho in sports," he said. "When Pallone said in his book they could field an all-star team of dudes that are gay in baseball, that started kind of like a witch hunt. Even some of the wives were asking their husbands, 'Are you one of them?' That was a heavy time. We were told about Glenn being gay long before it came out, but we didn't really believe it. Some guys didn't want to be in the shower with him. They didn't want him looking at them."

New York Yankees third baseman Scott Brosius, most valuable player in the World Series this year, has a wife and kids and a good-natured disposition. He doesn't think any gays in baseball need to make their sexuality known, and he would prefer to keep private matters private. But Brosius offered this thought: "It would be hard to imagine because of the intimacy of the way we live together on the road."

Peter Lefcourt's 1992 novel *The Dreyfus Affair* took this intimacy to its ultimate conclusion: two players fall in love during a pennant race. Shortstop Randy Dreyfus has a blonde wife (a real "looker") but can't take his eyes off his second baseman, D.J. Pickett. Lefcourt builds the relationship on the rapport the two share as baseball's best double-play combo. The narrative veers toward fabulism to make the point: Dreyfus comes up to bat with Pickett at third base in a key game and decides to try that riskiest of baseball plays, the suicide squeeze, all without the usual hand signals. "He was looking at D.J. and he was getting an inspiration," Lefcourt writes. "Not only did they have to win the game right now, but they had to do it in an unforgettable manner."

This scene offers such an intriguing gloss on sports, it's a wonder it has not been put on the big screen. The sight of the D.J. Pickett character breaking from third (played by Denzel Washington?) as the Randy Dreyfus character (Matthew McConaughey?) squares around to bunt has obvious cinematic potential. The ball would hang in the air, frames clicking by slowly. Jaws would drop as opposing players saw what was happening. Then the play would end and the players would trot back to the dugout with the crowd on its feet in deafening rapture.

In fact, Disney optioned the novel twice but has never made it into a film. "This was their worst nightmare," Lefcourt said in a recent phone interview, suggesting Disney was skittish about the public relations impact. "There was no fear about the content of the movie," said Terry Curtin, a spokesperson for Disney's film division. "It was a matter of just being able to attach the right elements. We were obviously interested in it; we optioned it twice." According to Lefcourt, the novel has since been optioned a third time, and he expects to find out soon whether screenwriter Larry Levin's latest draft will find its way to the screen. Barbra Streisand and Jodie Foster have shown interest in the project in the past. Lefcourt is hoping to drum up some fresh interest.

As for an actual athlete outing himself, he might find his best source of support outside the leagues: "If one of our athlete [endorsers] came out very publicly, we would support that athlete," said a high-level Nike employee who spoke on condition of anonymity. "What matters most is their performance on the field or on the course or on the track. What they do personally is none of our business." That's a tepid quote, but it's not as if Nike would necessarily be scared off by a little publicity, after all. It has been through years of controversy over working conditions in its plants abroad, among other topics, and it has stuck by controversial athletes—even Reggie White.

Still, when Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier 51 years ago, enduring untold abuse along the way, he could do so only because general manager Branch Rickey threw the weight of the Brooklyn Dodgers organization behind Robinson. Would a major league sports team do the same with a gay athlete, even a superstar? As Boston Red Sox general manager Dan Duquette said recently: "It might be a hard sell to a family atmosphere, depending on the market." That's probably true: lots of ostensibly open-minded parents don't like their children learning from gay teachers. What will they think when their children root and cheer for openly gay athletes?

And so it may be a long time yet before a pro athlete dares to declare that he is gay. But, eventually, it's bound to happen. "Baseball might be antiquated in a lot of ways, but it's also part of the society," New York Yankees manager Joe Torre told me a few months ago. "Society to me is so much more open than it used to be. I went to Atlanta, Georgia, in 1954 to see my brother play. I was in Ponce de Leon Park and I went to get a drink and it said 'Colored water fountain.' I said, 'What the hell does that mean?' We've come a long way."

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The self-contradictions of the Third Way.

THE SLIPPERY CENTER

By Jonathan Chait

Since the day he first set out to win the presidency, Bill Clinton has claimed that he represents a new ideology, the Third Way. "I got into this race for president because I was tired of Republican neglect and Democratic allegiance to programs that were outmoded," he declared in 1992. "I thought we ought to have a third way." And, in his last State of the Union address, he declared, "We have found a third way." But, in the hands of a politician as opportunistic as Clinton, the Third Way has not come to stand for a discrete ideology—as, say, "Reaganism" or "Jeffersonianism" have—but, rather, for political conscience lessness.

In the last year or so, however, the intellectuals around Clinton have undertaken to codify the Third Way into a genuine governing philosophy—to conceive a Clintonism that outlasts Clinton, a political template that will dominate the 2000 election and beyond. Last month, the Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) launched a new magazine, *Blueprint*, dedicated to defining Third Way policy. Clinton also attended a Third Way summit in New York with British Prime Minister Tony Blair and other foreign Third Way politicos. The accession of like-minded politicos abroad has allowed Third Way adherents to claim a degree of historical inevitability, particularly with the arrival of the new millennium, which Clinton regularly infuses with great historical import. Will Marshall, the president of the Progressive Policy Institute (PPI), the DLC's think tank, observes, "The president and the first lady think a Third Way approach to governing is his legacy."

Yet the paradox of the Third Way is that its ascension comes at a time when the polity has moved steadily rightward. This is no coincidence; Clintonites acknowledge that the Third Way is, in part, an effort to cope with constricted possibilities for liberal governance. What they do not seem to grasp is that the Third Way has also helped to bring this circumstance about.

The Third Way is one result of a broad process of rethinking by intellectuals on the left that dates back to the 1970s, when liberals started to question the efficacy of Great Society-era government and the New Deal coalition began unraveling. In the 1980s, this rethinking seeped into popular politics, and it led to the formation of the DLC, a centrist intraparty lobby set up to reverse the Democrats' declining fortunes. It is significant that the Third Way was created to fulfill a political mandate. It has never sorted out the distinction between ideology and strategy, and this basic confusion has marked the Third Way throughout its development.

The DLC critique held that the Democratic Party had fallen under the sway of liberal interest groups and had to move toward the political center in order to regain the New Democrats their majority. This required, first, the recruitment of a candidate and the writing of a platform. In April 1989, DLC Director Al From flew to Little Rock to meet with Governor Clinton. An unpublished Oxford University thesis by Kenneth Baer reveals how From essentially conceived the Clinton candidacy: "I said to Clinton, 'Have I got a deal for you,'" From told Baer. "If you take the DLC chairmanship, we will give you a national platform, and I think you will be president of the United States." From, writes Baer, penned a memo to Clinton outlining how the DLC would aid his candidacy by providing staff, access to fund-raising, and a platform. To do this, the DLC founded the PPI, which quickly made its mark with a manifesto called "The Politics of Evasion" by Elaine Kamarck and William Galston. This article, which fleshed out the DLC's essential political critique, became the organization's political blueprint; New Democrats still consider it the founding document of the Third Way.

Which, in many ways, it is: "The Politics of Evasion" captures both the Third Way's characteristic blend of ideological conviction and realpolitik and its lack of firm substantive moorings. The paper never truly engages liberalism on a philosophical level. Instead, it calls on Democrats to "recast the basic commitments of the Democratic Party in themes and programs that can bring support from a sustainable majority." Changing the party's rhetoric is, of course, very different from changing its agenda. Yet the paper floats between the two. "Above all," it says, "the next Democratic nominee must convey a clear understanding of, and identification with, the social values and moral sentiments of average Americans." Immediately thereafter: "The firm embrace of programs, such as national service, that link rights to responsibilities and effort to reward, would be a good start." And then: "The consistent use of middle-class values—individual responsibility, hard work, equal opportunity—rather than the language of compensa-

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tion would also help." The authors don't seem to care whether the Democrats actually believe in the values of average Americans—it is enough to "convey" and to "use" them. The call for new programs comes as a virtual afterthought.

This sounds like a mentality that would give birth to 30-second ads rather than serious wonkery. Yet the surprising thing is that, when the DLC crafted its platform during its 1990 and 1991 conventions, it yielded a bonanza of authentic policy innovation. The documents read today as a kind of proto-Clintonism: welfare reform, universal access to health care, restored equity to the tax code, national education standards, national service, more police officers, improving government efficiency, a free-trade pact with Mexico, the Brady Bill and the Family Leave Act, an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), government capital for microenterprises, preschool for all children, a middle-class tax cut, and more spending on physical infrastructure.

The list encompasses nearly all of the accomplishments of the first Clinton term. And the Third Way's triumphs go far beyond mere legislation. It has cured the Democratic Party of its McGovernite tendency to approach the population as a collection of special interests, compelling it instead to consider the interests of the majority. It forced liberals to come to grips with the limits of federal spending. And there is also the blunt political logic: a Third Way Democrat won the presidency twice, at a time when it was commonly believed that the GOP had a lock on the White House.

The Third Way succeeded politically because, at the time, a strategy of splitting the differences between Democrats and Republicans happened to produce good policy. But, as even its proponents concede, it has still not produced a coherent ideology that stands independent of political circumstances.

Two years ago, the New Democrats produced yet another manifesto, "The New Progressive Declaration." Today, it is supposed to serve, as Marshall says, as "the clearest expression of the Third Way." But it's still not very clear. Every thought in the declaration stems from a single, unsubstantiated premise—that technology has rendered activist government obsolete. Having consigned New Deal government to the dustbin of history, the document then wistfully assigns responsibility for solving societal ills elsewhere. For instance, "[F]ortifying the family is everyone's responsibility." And, "We must replace today's 'winner take all' outlook with a new vision of democratic capitalism based on sharing gains as well as risks," meaning that corporations ought to give their employees more stock ownership, training, and control over decisions. A fine thought, but why would business choose to take on these social burdens without a financial incentive to do so? The document never explains.

The Third Way as laid out in "The New Progressive Declaration" might sound like nothing more than airy, futuristic naïveté. But it is rooted in the concrete reality of a changing electorate. New Democrats are intensely conscious that the voting population is increasingly made up of upper-income suburbanites and, consequently, is less in need of government largesse. The Third Way's view of the new economy perfectly fits the demands of the new electorate. It happens, conveniently enough, that technological and economic changes dictate that government is capable of doing only those things that suburban voters want it to do.

This is, perhaps, a bit too convenient, giving rise to the suspicion that the Third Way is just a fancy intellectual rationalization for a political tactic. But it's not quite that simple. While the Third Way has always had a whiff of expediency about it, it isn't always clear if the tactics are chasing the ideology or vice versa. For instance, the PPI's first briefing argued for the EITC and against the minimum wage—not only on the merits, but also as a matter of political expediency. Yet, merits aside, support for the minimum wage has proven an almost inexhaustible source of political benefit for Democrats. Likewise, Third Way-ites claim that the public supports curtailing Social Security and Medicare, despite the fact that Democratic politicians have thrived for decades by defending these programs.

Sometimes, then, the Third Way-ites opportunistically craft policy to match public opinion, while at other times they put forth ideas they sincerely believe in, accompanied by fanciful claims about their political benefits. The common thread is a tendency to blur the distinction between virtue and expediency. This is a new approach toward politics for the left. Liberals used to believe that, while they represented the majority on most issues, they also had an obligation to push the public to accept certain policies it didn't favor. Third Way adherents refuse to entertain the possibility that principles could have any political cost—they consider this (to borrow from Clinton) "a false choice." Last year, From wrote that a DLC poll "confirms what New Democrats have always believed—that what's right for the country substantively is right for the Democratic Party politically." Why would they believe that what's right and what's popular should always coincide? (History, after all, suggests otherwise.) Because the Third Way consciously hews to the political center, and the center, by definition, is popular.

Third Way disciples resent having their philosophy reduced to such vulgar centrism. "It has been more than a series of tactical shifts designed to capture a majority for the next election," insists Marshall. Yet, if the Third Way is a coherent philosophy, then its various international manifestations would bear strong resemblance to one another—and that's not the case. While Blair imported the Third Way from the DLC, in practice his policies share little with those of Clinton. Indeed, the Third Way differs from nation to nation even in its definition. Europeans portray it as a middle way between capitalism and socialism. The Third Way in the United States, which has no comparable socialist tradition, instead sets its left pole as New Deal liberal-

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ism—which *itself* is a middle way between socialism and the unrestrained market. The only thing all these governments have in common is that they occupy a particular niche—ever so slightly to the left of center—that depends entirely on the political arrangements they inherited. So, while the Third Way may have more to it than simple difference-splitting, it remains inescapably bound to the endpoints of the political spectrum.

The political upside of this strategy is immediate and blindingly obvious. In a democracy, the center implicitly confers popular legitimacy and, hence, electoral success. Yet the very reason for the Third Way's success—its control of the political middle ground—simultaneously undermines it.

Here's the conundrum. The Third Way assumes a basic political symmetry—an unreconstructed left, a radical right, and a Third Way nestled in between. But, when the Third Way takes power, it alters that equation. "This politics," says Clinton Third Way guru Sidney Blumenthal, "is now incontrovertibly the politics of the national Democratic Party." This means that the Third Way no longer sits between the two poles of the political spectrum; it *is* the left pole. The calculus has changed, and, in order to retain the center, the Third Way must shift right again.

The self-defeating process can be seen in the political trajectory of Robert Reich, Clinton's former secretary of labor. Reich has come to represent the left wing of the Democratic Party, but, in the 1980s, he was a neoliberal. Reich argued that government should not passively accept the dislocations brought about by economic change, but neither should it try to halt them. Instead, he advocated a middle position: equip people to take responsibility for themselves through public investments in education, training, and infrastructure. This moderately heretical notion became a central part of Clinton's 1992 platform.

In office, however, Clinton followed the advice of fiscal hawks like Robert Rubin of the Treasury Department, who favored reducing the budget deficit, even at the expense of new investments. Then, after the Republican takeover of Congress in 1994, Clinton came under the influence of Dick Morris and Erskine Bowles. Once more his priorities shifted rightward—from reducing the deficit to reducing the size of government. Clinton's 1997 budget deal drastically shrank the portion of the federal budget devoted to investments. Reich has since left his job to publish a book chronicling Clinton's ideological betrayal.

The point is not that Clinton erred in deviating from Reichian purity. Rather, it's that his various doctrinal stages—investment, deficit reduction, shrinking government—all qualified as Third Way ideologies of a sort and yet they are mutually incompatible. Consider Rubin's ideological sojourn. Once a member of the administration's conservative wing, he has become the house liberal—even though his views haven't changed at all. Today's new Third Way idea is tomorrow's old liberal dogma.

This essential pattern has played itself out over and over again. In 1992, the DLC advocated universal health coverage. When Clinton unveiled his original plan, it was commonly described as a "third way" between the liberal single-payer plan and conservative piecemeal reforms. Clinton's plan immediately became the liberal position. The DLC renounced it and endorsed a more moderate proposal that did not provide universal coverage.

Or take entitlement reform. For many years, Democrats denied the need to scale back Social Security. The DLC took the apostate view that it was necessary to trim Social Security in order to save it. This has since become conventional wisdom among Democrats. Now the DLC advocates some form of Social Security privatization—a stance that, just five years ago, would have put it to the right of most Republicans.

The shift has been subtler on free trade and welfare reform. Here, Clinton originally stood for the best sort of Third Way innovation. He advocated an expansion of trade agreements and an end to welfare entitlements, but coupled with generous federal investments—child care, health care, job training—to help those left behind. This contrasted with the conservative position, which held that no one would be hurt by welfare reform and free trade or that anyone who was would have only himself to blame. But any distinction between Clinton's ideas of free trade and welfare reform and the Republicans' has faded. And the neoliberal synthesis Clinton once sustained has disappeared with it, leaving congressional Democrats with the unpalatable choice of lining up behind Paul Wellstone's view or Newt Gingrich's.

So the Third Way has had an ironic result. It has destabilized the center, becoming an ever-shifting median between a liberalism that is moving to the right and a conservatism that is moving to the right. Instead of the Third Way shaping the political landscape, the political landscape has shaped the Third Way. And the times Clinton has tacked left—like this year's budget deal—simply reflect a fleeting political opportunity, such as the Republican House's desire to avoid a policy fight that would distract from Bimbroglio.

The intellectuals around Clinton are not the first to look at the political world and decide that it demanded a third way. Swedish socialists, New Deal liberals, and various Communist reformers have all claimed the label before. But the Clintonites were the first to decide they needed a third way before they knew what it ought to be. They have gone about the whole thing backwards.

The Third Way, then, represents the Clinton presidency in all its promise and all its disappointment. At once it embodies the new principles of his early presidency and his retreat from those same principles. This is not really an ideology, but it is not quite the complete lack thereof, either. It is a contradiction, and it is also the best definition of Clintonism. •

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What's at stake in the Microsoft trial.

SOFTWARE BARON

By Richard Wolffe

The videotaped interrogation seemed uncannily familiar—a disheveled, pale-faced chief executive parsing his sworn testimony in an attempt to dodge a prosecutor's traps. The federal courthouse in Washington, D.C., had witnessed something similar just two months earlier. But that was a different charge—and a different Bill.

This time it's Bill Gates on the stand. He is accused of abusing the power of his office as chairman of the most successful company of modern times. And, at the start of the biggest antitrust trial in a generation, government lawyers tore into his testimony, even though technically Microsoft—not its founder—is in the dock. The charges might be technologically complex, but the message is clear enough. Gates allegedly masterminded a conspiracy to kill off a rival company, using his monopoly control over 90 percent of the world's computers as the weapon.

The charges facing Gates—in the same building that houses Kenneth Starr's grand jury—are hardly impeachable. After all, Gates will still have his throne when this is all over. But, if proved, they are likely to leave a far more durable mark on the next century, for this is not merely an argument about one company or one very, very rich man. At its heart, the Microsoft monopoly trial will determine who writes the business rules of cyberspace—the government or Microsoft. And, while the current trial concentrates on the conversations of technogeeks in smoke-free rooms, the underlying issue is more basic: Are Gates and company just too powerful for the public good?

The answer lies in the nature of the information highway, which the century-old conceptual world of American antitrust law would treat more like an information railroad. Like the robber barons of the last century, the companies that control the engines and infrastructure of the computer age could wield almost untrammeled power over tomorrow's commercial and social links. And so, the government argues, if Microsoft controls both our desktop computer screens and our means of using the Internet, it is unlikely to stop there. The temptation may be to extend that economic power into other areas, such as payment systems on the Internet, banking services, and Web television. Microsoft would own the metaphorical bridge to the twenty-first century.

In fact, one of the seminal cases in this obscure corner of the law involves two bridges over the Mississippi River. A group of railroads jointly owned the two bridges as well as a ferry for railroad cars and the only terminal in St. Louis. They excluded other railroad companies, thus controlling all traffic through the hub, until the Supreme Court in 1912 ordered the railroads to open up access to their rivals at a reasonable cost. The scenario has become known as the bottleneck monopoly. While Microsoft is unlikely to want to exercise a similar form of control over consumer access to the Internet, the government believes Microsoft could establish a stranglehold over those companies that seek to service the cyber age. But does the government have a point?

Microsoft's power base lies in two large tracts of computing real estate. One is the computer screen, which users see when they switch on their machines. Microsoft says this is part of its intellectual property, a vital component of the computing experience on which it has built its brand. But, in the Internet age, the humble screen can become a shopping mall, library, newsstand, or telephone kiosk. How that screen is designed and how it operates could affect how consumers use the Internet. Ergo, Microsoft could give an online provider a privileged position on the desktop display in return for other business.

Microsoft's other, and arguably more significant, property is the technical information that software developers require in order to work with Windows, the operating software which drives more than 90 percent of the world's personal computers. By tightly controlling this information and, particularly, the timing of its publication, Microsoft can favor some developers over others. Moreover, it could use that technical edge to merge new products into Windows, as it has already done with the Internet browser. (That argument also provides the basis for the U.S. government's separate lawsuit against Microsoft's principal partner in the personal computer revolution: Intel. Officials at the Federal Trade Commission are suing the world's largest chipmaker for

RICHARD WOLFFE is covering the Microsoft trial for the *Financial Times*.

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allegedly withholding technical information from rivals in an abuse of its monopoly power.)

The barriers to building a new bridge to rival the one already owned by Microsoft are high. The central role of Windows, managing the operations at the heart of a computer, has been reinforced by hundreds of so-called applications such as Microsoft Word, the word processor that is the most popular software in history. The more widespread Word gets, the more entrenched Windows becomes, as Microsoft reaps the rewards of "network effects." It does so for the same reason that there's no point in developing a new telephone line with just one phone at the end of it. It only works if you can convince millions of customers to buy new phones and be part of the network. According to Joel Klein, head of the antitrust division at the Justice Department, that monopoly control over computer screens is one of the central worries that prompted the lawsuit. "In the new world of the high-tech economy, where so much of what we do will be through interconnectivity and common standards, that will lead to the aggregation of economic power and concerns about bottleneck monopolies," he says.

The government itself estimates that Internet commerce in the United States is likely to exceed $300 billion by 2002. And Microsoft is perfectly placed to take advantage of that: it already enjoys an extraordinary position within the modern economy. Just 23 years old, the company is already one of the largest on the U.S. stock market—neck and neck with General Electric—and is valued at around $260 billion. Its earnings in the first quarter of this year rose by an astonishing 58 percent as the company made $1.52 billion in net profits.

Gates himself is by far the richest man in the United States, worth $58 billion according to the new *Forbes* 400 list—twice the fortune of the second-wealthiest man, his best friend, Warren Buffett. His staggering wealth outstrips even the most notorious antitrust target in U.S. history—John D. Rockefeller, whose Standard Oil Company was broken up into 34 companies at the start of the century. Rockefeller was only worth about $25.6 billion in current prices, according to Ronald Chernow's recent biography of the great tycoon.

The source of Gates's fortune, and Microsoft's vast profits, is Windows—the operating system that has spurred the success of the entire PC industry. Once you have succeeded in establishing the industry standard, everyone must knock on your door, as Gates himself acknowledged at a public conference way back in 1981. "I really shouldn't say this," he announced, "but in some ways it leads, in an individual product category, to a natural monopoly where somebody properly documents, properly trains, properly promotes a particular package."

News of Microsoft's latest profits ironically came on the second day of the trial, as its lawyers were opening the company's defense in court. Responding to the government's charge that Microsoft rakes in monopoly profits, John Warden, its lead attorney, argued that its success in fact sits on a knife-edge. Microsoft was only popular because its products were competitive, but that competition was fierce—and it remains so, despite the company's staggering market share. "Microsoft must constantly innovate to remain viable in each succeeding round of competition, and the pace of that competition is extremely rapid. It is not a comfortable, quiet monopoly backwater," he said. "[Computer makers] have alternatives. They have them today, and there will be plenty of others to come. They install Windows because that is what their customers want, and they ... are demand-driven enterprises in a highly competitive business. Microsoft has not denied consumer choice. It *is* consumer choice."

Is there really any basis for believing that Microsoft could abuse its effective monopoly power to establish a stranglehold on the Internet? Does the company really have the power to prevent the development of new technologies that could render it as obsolete as, well, the Penn Central Railroad? If the government's evidence about Microsoft's browser wars with Netscape Communications is correct, the answer may really be "yes."

On the one hand, it is true that the company that dominates the industry also fears for its life, strange as that might sound. Microsoft knows that a paradigm shift in technology could bring any giant to its knees. That paranoia was born in its formative experiences with IBM in the '80s, when Microsoft was a mere contractor to the industry leader, supplying the early operating system for IBM's first personal computers. Within ten years, Gates had outstripped his former client in size and power as the PC industry exploded.

Fear of history repeating itself appears to lie behind the battle with Netscape. Microsoft had woken up late to the Internet's appeal and was lagging behind the small,

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new company. Netscape was storming ahead with its Navigator browser software, which allows computer users to download multimedia information from the World Wide Web. Its threat to Microsoft was not just its rapid success. Its real power lay in its use of Java, a programming language developed by Sun Microsystems, which allows applications to run on all kinds of operating systems, not just Windows. Together, Netscape and Java could make Windows a forgotten piece of plumbing deep inside the computer box.

Yet, however real Microsoft's fear may have been, it led Microsoft to engage in behavior that, at the very least, skirted the law's limits. By the middle of 1995, Netscape's success had alerted Microsoft to its strategic blunder. While the two companies were already sharing some technical information, Microsoft wanted to develop its own Internet browsing software. In June 1995, with the two companies still engaged in a friendly dialogue, executives from both sides met to discuss technical issues.

What happened at the meeting at Netscape's headquarters is hotly disputed, but the discussions stand at the center of the allegations against Microsoft. For Netscape and the government, Microsoft's abuse of power was clear—it proposed an illegal conspiracy to carve up the market in Internet software. Microsoft would serve Windows customers, while Netscape would mostly sell to business customers using non-Windows systems. In the words of Jim Barksdale, Netscape's chief executive and the government's star witness, Microsoft wanted to draw a line between the two businesses. "Here we are, a little company, and you are a big company with unlimited resources, and you are going to move the line toward our economic interests," he told the court.

Microsoft insists this is a complete fabrication. Netscape concocted the whole idea of a market carve-up because it wanted to protect its 70 percent share of the Internet market. Far from being a big bad monopoly, Microsoft says, it wanted to stop Netscape from strangling the market at birth. All it proposed was a "strategic relationship" where the two would cooperate on technical information and marketing to create new products and expand use of the Internet. In his videotaped deposition, Gates claims the first time he learned of any carve-up claims in the meeting was when he read a *Wall Street Journal* article earlier this year. When asked if he knew of any attempts by his company to carve up the market, Gates said: "I am not aware of any such thing.... It is very much against the way we operate."

According to one source close to Microsoft's legal team, the aggressive intent was all Netscape's. "I think what happened is that they wanted a different kind of business," he said. "They had set their goal to take this highly successful browser operation and migrate it into being a platform [like Windows]. They wanted Microsoft's help in destroying Microsoft."

In any event, there was no deal. That prompted Microsoft to unleash its competitive fury—Jeff Raikes, a Microsoft sales executive, said, "Netscape pollution must be eradicated"—and the battle that followed provides a unique insight into how Microsoft wields its formidable market power.

First, Microsoft struck a series of deals with the industry—computer makers, Internet service companies, and Internet content suppliers—to exclude Netscape's browser and promote its own. Manufacturers who challenged the contracts were supposedly threatened with losing their lucrative access to Windows, although Microsoft denies that. Many of these contracts have now lapsed, and Microsoft says it will not renew them.

Just as powerful was Microsoft's use of "reverse bounties," or business favors. In particular, the government accuses the company of being prepared to sacrifice its own online venture—the Microsoft Network—in the greater war against Netscape. Microsoft is accused of offering America Online unique access to the Windows desktop installed on every computer, as long as it committed itself to Microsoft's browser, Internet Explorer. One America Online executive reported a meeting with the Microsoft chairman himself: "Gates offered a characteristically blunt query: 'How much do we need to pay you to screw Netscape? This is your lucky day.'" (Microsoft hasn't challenged this yet, although they may do so in the future.)

Microsoft's crushing blow was to distribute its own Internet browser for free. Netscape made the bulk of its money from licenses for its software. Overnight, Microsoft undercut those revenues and eventually forced its rival to follow suit. As Gates told the *Financial Times* in June 1996: "Our business model works even if all Internet software is free.... We are still selling operating systems. What does Netscape's business model look like [if that happens]? Not very good."

The final weapon came inside the shrink-wrapped package of Windows 98, the latest version of the operating software, released this past summer. Browsing software no longer exists on its own but is now fully integrated into Windows; those who use Windows 98 can "browse" their own computers using the same tools and graphics as they use to "browse" the Internet. What were once competing products have been crossbred to create a new concept in managing computers. Even Netscape admits it is now impossible to find where one begins and the other ends.

To be sure, the fact that Microsoft's alleged victim, Netscape, remains alive and relatively healthy would seem to undermine the government's case. Netscape plans to "carpet bomb" consumers with more than 100 million free software copies this year, and the number of its own browser users rose from 40 million to 65 million last year. That hardly connotes competition being crushed. Microsoft also notes, rightly, that its strategy has meant that, in effect, consumers now get for free what Netscape once sold for $39 a copy. If consumers are better off, Microsoft asks, what's the rationale for government intrusion?

In making this argument, Microsoft has the implicit

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support of such luminaries as Alan Greenspan, the Fed chairman, who has cast doubt on Klein's antitrust agenda by challenging the government's ability to forecast the effects of new technology. At a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing in June, he praised the entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley for their aggressive, competitive behavior, which, he said, undermines monopoly power as it is traditionally understood. "Forecasting the way markets will evolve and the way technology will evolve is an excruciatingly difficult job," he stated. "History is strewn with people who made predictions that proved to be wrong. I would like to see far more firm roots to our judgments."

Veterans of the pro-market Reagan administration, which was conspicuously reluctant to pursue antitrust cases, are quick to agree. "This is essentially a case of 'big is bad,'" says Rick Rule, a consultant to Microsoft and former head of the Justice Department's antitrust division. "Rather than focusing on the objective of harm to competition and consumers' interests, they are looking after competitors. They are saying this company is too big and the government is going to take it down a couple of notches." Haley Barbour, the former chairman of the Republican National Committee, puts it even more bluntly: "Frankly, what the deal is, despite the Clinton administration's protestations ... is a case of a pro-regulation administration using antitrust enforcement as a guise to try to get its regulatory claws on the technology industry."

Klein, of course, denies any such sentiments. (And, in a strange twist, none other than Robert Bork, intellectual father of conservative anti-regulatory doctrine on antitrust law, has been working on behalf of Netscape.) "We are concerned about the aggregation of market power in a way that could hurt consumers," Klein says. "On the other hand, we are on the side of aggregation of power that is efficient and pro-consumer. There is not an antipathy to big business. It is a concern about Microsoft's control of the bottleneck monopoly of the desktop."

Klein has a point. It's all well and good that consumers save $39 on their browsers. But, down the road, who will set the prices we pay to shop online? If the marketplace is to shrink to the size of a computer screen, shouldn't we care about who can set up shop on it?

Unfortunately for Klein, the higher courts may disagree. In a devastating ruling in June, the appeals court in Washington, D.C., ruled that Microsoft was well within its rights to combine its products if it could argue that it provided some plausible consumer benefits. The ruling was based on the earlier consent decree, but the issue of bundling Internet browsers with Windows remains largely the same. "Antitrust scholars have long recognized the undesirability of having courts oversee product design, and any dampening of technological innovation would be at cross-purposes with antitrust law," the court wrote, splitting along political lines—two Republican appointees versus one judge named by Jimmy Carter.

And, even if Klein makes his case successfully, it will merely beg another, equally vexing question: How do you police a company and an industry that have built success on aggressive competition? Is it possible to draft rules that foresee the scope of new technology?

The government's lawsuit in May merely suggested some preliminary actions, like forcing Microsoft to ship Netscape's browser along with its own. Its latest filings talk more ominously of "further remedies" to be decided at further court hearings. Unless the government and Microsoft agree on yet another consent decree about how the company will do business—unlikely, since the past efforts at getting such an agreement have failed—that leaves three options. The first involves breaking the company in two: one of the offspring would produce Windows, and the other would produce applications that run on Windows. It's a neat-enough solution, but it doesn't really address the problem of the all-powerful Windows monopoly.

Another possibility would be to create two or more clones of Microsoft—call them the Baby Bills—each of which would produce its own version of Windows and applications. These companies would engage in equal but vigorous competition on the same turf. A third possibility, which the state attorneys general support, is to leave Microsoft intact but force it to license Windows to several software companies. Microsoft would get royalties and hopefully maintain some incentive to innovate.

The problem with both cloning and licensing is what happens to Windows itself in such a world. The inevitable consequence is that different versions of Windows would evolve, undermining the very strength of the product: its universal acceptance. Perhaps the Internet itself offers a glimpse of such a world in which different computers are able to communicate with one another regardless of their operating software—in which case Microsoft was right to identify Netscape as a potential business killer.

In the end, only one thing seems close to certain. The Microsoft case shows every sign of mirroring the ill-fated IBM case in terms of the tedious length of its legal battles. The IBM case dragged on for 13 years before Reagan's Justice Department dropped it in 1982. Microsoft's first antitrust investigation began in 1990 at the FTC, before the Justice Department picked up the baton. Eight years later, the matter shows few signs of swift resolution. In spite of the expedited preparations, the trial is unlikely to limp its way through the district court much before Christmas.

The smart money backs the government there, in a court that has already sided with it over the consent decree. On the other hand, the appeals court has already ruled in favor of Microsoft on similar issues this year and can reasonably be expected to do the same next year. Both sides expect the case to end in the same place—the Supreme Court. Never mind your computer crashing; the lengthy trials of Microsoft are a far more intractable problem for the year 2000. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Of Human Bondages

Eccentric and oblique, **La Sentinelle** (Strand) declines to be categorized. This French film is simultaneously a political thriller, a Kafkaesque agon, a Parisian romance. The making of it is so sure-handed, so confident of our understanding, that, fairly early on, we see that its refusal to behave like a one-genre film is part of its design.

The writer-director was Arnaud Desplechin, who was 31 in 1991 when the picture was made and who has since made another feature. *La Sentinelle* is set in 1989, in the last days of the Soviet Union. It opens with some comments about Yalta by a French diplomat in Germany. One of the listening group is Mathias, the young son of a deceased French diplomat who soon returns to Paris to study forensic medicine. On the train, at the border, he is suddenly taken at gunpoint to the baggage car, where he is interviewed by an obese official in one of those cat-and-mouse games between a detective and a suspect, except that here the suspect doesn't know what's going on, the official is unidentified, and the quizzing comes to no point. Later, in Paris, the point becomes—mysteriously—clear. Among his things Mathias finds a carefully wrapped, mummified human head, presumably put in his luggage while he was with the official.

Why? That is much too direct a question for this film, which seems to start like a nervous animal when a question is put to it. What happens, however, is that, as Mathias learns more about pathology, he dissects and analyzes the head, ultimately determining that it belonged to a Russian scientist who had been in the Far East. While this near-obsessive analysis goes on, Mathias's sister, who is a singer, rehearses as part of a troupe that is going to the USSR with a scheme to rescue a scientist, and Mathias himself gets involved in a love affair and is tangentially involved in the love affair of his apartment-mate, who is a government agent of some kind.

In this whirligig of hints and flashes, two themes predominate. The very presence of the human head in Mathias's keeping has effects on him that have nothing to do with solving a crime: they smack of some haunting affinity even as he is clinically digging into the skull. A fellow student in whom he confides suggests that he go to the police; Mathias declines, almost feeling that the police would be intruding in what he feels is a private affair. (Not incidentally, that other student is Jewish. At their first meeting Mathias offends him with a little joke, but eventually they become good friends—another strand in the film's counterpoint.)

The second spirit hovering over the film is Europe: European politics and hugger-mugger about politics. That baggage-car official had said that, if the borders ever come down between nations, they will all tear one another apart, something that in a way has been horrifyingly proved in what was Yugoslavia; and it is part of Desplechin's off-center scheme that the devices he chooses show how huge political forces filter down into the life of a medical student, possibly because his father was a diplomat who labored for peace.

The film is tidily cast—Emmanuel Salinger as Mathias has an appealing presence, Marianne Denicourt is pleasing as his sister—yet it is Desplechin's style that basically holds us: a quasi-collage, a sliver of this, an intriguing slice of that, a suddenly large chunk of something else, all moving toward affirmation of mystery rather than its solution. (The picture doesn't finish in any formal way: it simply stops when it has done all that it wants to do.) *La Sentinelle* was shown at the New York Film Festival in 1992: six years had to pass before it found a release here. High time, especially—though not only—because it will now provoke further questions about its nature and details. These questions are not instantly answerable, but the picture is so subtly made and so tantalizing in its hints that it is instantly provocative.

Seemingly, Toni Morrison has taken as the injunction for her career the manifesto of Stephen Dedalus: "I go to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race." This is not remotely to equate her with Joyce, simply to suggest a comparable intent. The degree to which Morrison is accomplishing her aim is, Nobel or not, questioned by some, but her aim stands clear. The best quality of **Beloved** (Touchstone), adapted from her novel, is that it has some sense of obligation to her mythopoeic aim.

But what an attenuated and dreary job they have made of it. The screenplay by Akosua Busia, Richard LaGravenese, and Adam Brooks begins with an hour or so of long, softly spoken speeches

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Bad Manners. *An old pattern—two guests alter the lives of their hosts and vice versa—but some icicle dialogue and good performances by Bonnie Bedelia and Caroleen Feeney. (Reviewed 11/2/98)* **Happiness.** *Mordant comedy about desire and sex and—even—love today, assuming some contemporary inner vacancies. Sharply, disquietingly written, directed, and acted. (11/9/98)* **Lolita.** *She still isn't the 12-year-old of the book, but Dominique Swain is an adolescent killer, and Jeremy Irons does some nice suffering. (10/5/98)* **Saving Private Ryan.** *World War II—as seen by Steven Spielberg. D-Day shakes the earth; what follows is a good enough war movie. (8/17&24/98)*—**SK**

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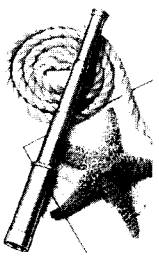

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addressed to each other by Sethe, the Mother Earth of the story, and Paul D, the ex-slave who comes to live with her in Ohio (the period is just after the Civil War). All these large but quiet pronouncements are done in intense close-up, dimly lighted.

Eventually the film continues, with a series of scenes that are treated like three-dimensional illustrations for the book, murky in motivations and volatile in time planes. (The story interweaves past and present, not always in a helpful manner.) Occasionally there is a splash of terror—Sethe's Medea-like actions in the past to save her children from slavery, the tantrums in the present of Beloved, her impaired daughter—but mostly the film seems a series of attempts to satisfy the novel's millions of readers. ("See? We got this scene in.")

For nearly three hours *Beloved* slogs along in this near-apologetic manner. A chief culprit in this lumbering progress is the director, Jonathan Demme. Past films of his, notably *Philadelphia* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, have shown some grip and drive, some sense of vision being fulfilled. But here he seems uncomfortable, unresolved about how he wants to shoot the film, grabbing at one scene after the other, hoping that he has found the way to shoot it. We soon get the feeling that we are watching what in writing would be a first draft.

Oprah Winfrey, the Sethe, shows, as she showed in *The Color Purple* before her TV coronation, that she is a competent actress. She gives the woman some authenticity, if not commanding power. Kimberly Elise, as her daughter Denver, has grace. Thandie Newton, as Beloved, the deranged daughter, has an easier part, outflung and "dramatic"; it's always easier to play non-normal people than normal ones. But Newton handles all the pyrotechnics capably. Danny Glover is Paul D—with his usual honesty. The cinematographer, Tak Fujimoto, evidently found a small-key light to make Glover's eyes shine brightly when he's being especially sincere or emotional, which helps. Most of whatever mythic quality there is in the film derives from Beah Richards as the preacher Baby Suggs. Like a mundane prophet, she summons her people to proud life after the long endurance of slavery. •

Jed Perl on Art

True North

"From Van Eyck to Bruegel," a title both resolutely forthright and thrillingly grand, is perfect for the exhibition that is at the Metropolitan Museum of Art through December. This spectacular survey of Netherlandish painting of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is mainly drawn from the museum's own collections. And the impact of seeing together works that are generally located in different parts of the museum, or at the Cloisters, or are in storage, creates something that is much more than the sum of its formidable parts.

From the first gallery, which contains Jan van Eyck's diptych of the *Crucifixion* and *Last Judgment* and Robert Campin's *Annunciation Triptych*, the show is visual bliss; no artists have ever given us more to look at than the early Netherlandish masters. Maryan W. Ainsworth and Keith Christiansen, the curators in charge, have shaped this cornucopia of wonders into an exhibition with a mesmerizing narrative flow. Where the museum's phenomenal holdings don't quite make the curators' points about shifting studio techniques or the evolution of portraiture or the rise of landscape painting, they have brought in some dazzlingly apt loans. This extraordinary exhibition is the museological equivalent of a book that you cannot put down.

Van Eyck's *Crucifixion*, which dates from around 1430, is an epic in miniature. This tall, narrow painting—it is a mere 22 ¼ by 7 ⅝ inches—is teeming with figures sunk in wickedness or overcome with grief, and there seems to be no end to the fine-spun complexities that we find ourselves unpacking with our eyes. The *Crucifixion* is some kind of impossible physics problem triumphantly solved, for van Eyck gives us more volume, more air, more light than the painting's actual dimensions should be able to hold. There is intricacy and amplitude, density and luminosity.

Van Eyck bewitches us with an overload of details, yet the elaboration doesn't close the painting down. That is the miracle. His rendering of the earth itself is so palpable that you feel that you can touch the rocky, dusty terrain with your hands (and what a thought that is for a painting about death). This cracked earth, which is so elegantly realized that it ought to call attention only to itself, is the launching pad for an awesomely stark drama, for figures such as the heavily draped women gathered around the Virgin in the foreground, each of whom is a masterpiece of concentrated, almost microscopic, sculptural grandeur.

What lifts van Eyck above all the other early Netherlandish masters and places him among the titans of European art is his elusive stylelessness, the way he weaves particularity and generality into a seamless whole. No wonder Eugène Fromentin, the artist whose *Old Masters of Belgium and Holland*, published in 1876, is one of the bellwethers of modern taste, wrote that van Eyck could make him feel as if "the art of painting has found its highest expression ... at its very first hour." Before van Eyck, at least so far as the Metropolitan show is concerned, there is only Robert Campin, but that is quite an only, when we are confronted with the *Annunciation Triptych*. (Better known as the *Merode Triptych*, it dates from around 1425–30.) This is a grandly domesticated view of Mary before Jesus, full of heart-stopping silvery details. And after that the riches here are almost beyond number. There is the softer clarity of Hans Memling, whom Fromentin described as a dreamer in comparison to van Eyck's thinker. Petrus Christus has a sweet delicacy and a storyteller's psychological penetration. And at this point we are barely into the show.

If there is a unifying principle in early Netherlandish painting, from van Eyck's tapestry richness of pattern to Pieter Bruegel the Elder's expanses of opalescent blue-gray, it has to do with the way in which color is treated as translucency that suffuses and illuminates drawing. We will never know all the particular combinations of oil and egg emulsion and who knows what else that were used to create these dazzling effects, but we can see that the result is to give even dark and heavy colors a light-filled excitement. This Northern color has a stained-glass effect; the hues are suspended over or intermingled with all the graphic detail, so that we feel both the lucidity of a linear articulation of structure and the enveloping unity of free-flowing color.

One of the most interesting loans in the Metropolitan show, from a private collection, is a very fine though anonymous *Virgin and Child with Saints* (about 1480), in which some later, extremely aggressive repainting has now

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been removed to reveal the first beautiful drawing of the Virgin and Child. When museumgoers compare this good-size drawing with the finished figures in the same panel, they can begin to see how line and color function as interdependent yet somehow autonomous systems in early Netherlandish painting. But there is hardly a picture in this show that isn't worth a second or a third look, and there are many paintings that I can't ever imagine not wanting to come back to.

The rooms unfold wonderfully; the paintings are hung in such a way as to create a visual rhythm that is pretty close to perfection. The sculptures and the smaller devotional objects that are included provide deft comparative material. And the idea of displaying certain altarpieces and panels on pedestals rather than on the walls provides a gratifyingly intimate relationship with these objects. We are reminded of how far removed Netherlandish painting is from the basic modern situation of a framed canvas hanging on a gallery wall.

Memling's pair of portraits of the handsome Italian couple Tommasso and Maria Portinari (about 1470) is set at the center of a room full of portraits that is one of the high points of the show. Here are some of the most beloved works in the Metropolitan: portraits by Memling, Hugo van der Goes, Dieric Bouts, and Rogier van der Weyden, and Jean Hey's pensive Margaret of Austria, and the charmingly goofy man who holds a fascinating heart-shaped book in a panel by the Master of the View of Sainte Gudule. In this gallery of portraits we come face to face with some of the merchants and the aristocrats who commissioned these works, and the precision that the artists bring to the rendering of their subjects yields an incandescent emotional truth.

In his essay on portraits, Matisse observes that "recording the model's features reveals feelings often unknown even to the very diviner who has brought them to light." Looking at certain Netherlandish faces, we still imagine that unknown feelings are being revealed. Nobody gets as close as these fifteenth-century masters to the sense of what it is like to live in your own skin. There is an astounding, slowed-down awareness of physicality as a psychological revelation that pervades these portraits as it does no others in the history of art. These young, often wealthy men and women, with their gleaming eyes, beautifully cut hair, fine clothes, and intricate jewels, exude a concentrated erotic energy, and we do not find it strange that they are so often holding their hands in prayer. Johan Huizinga, in some of the great pages on

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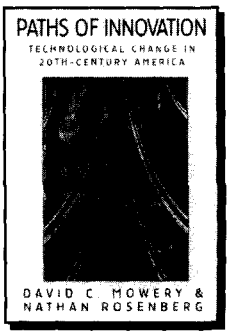

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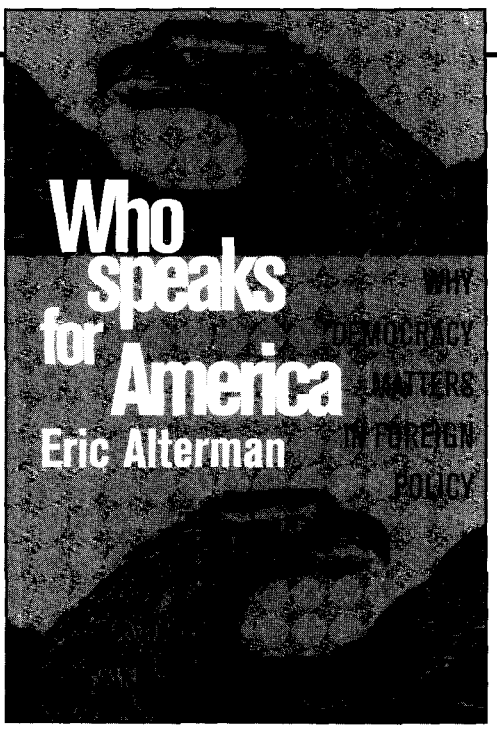

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—Mark A. Uhlig, *New York Times Book Review*

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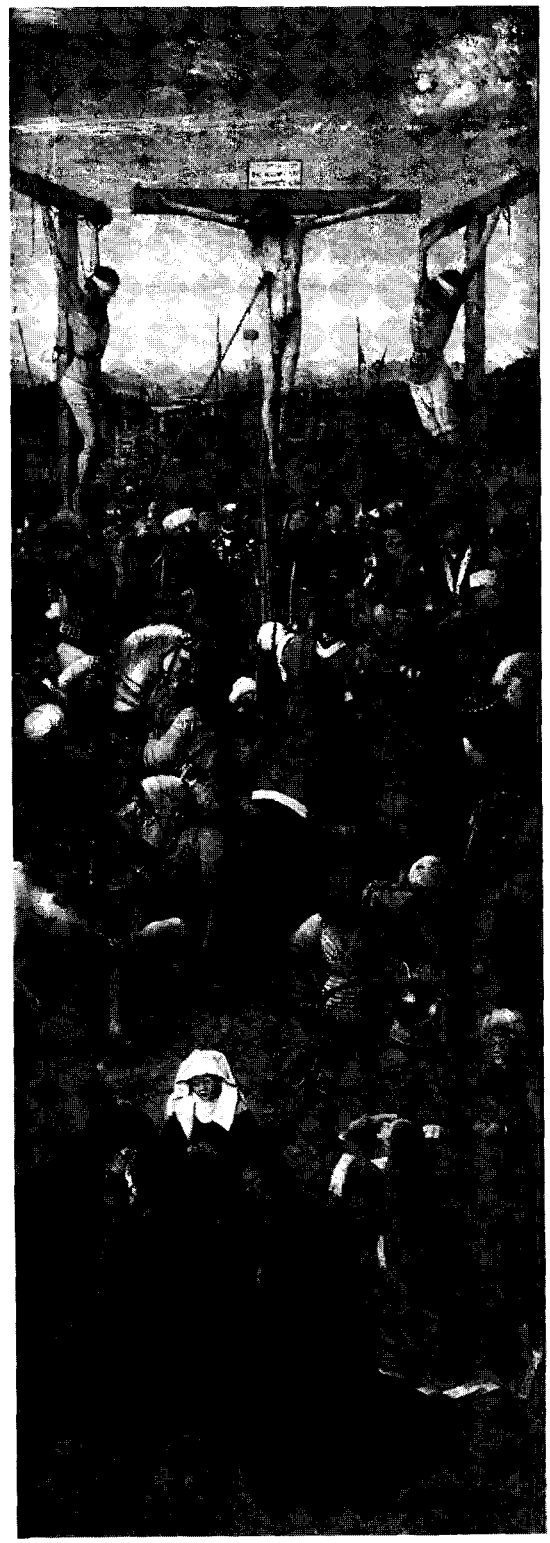
Netherlandish painting in *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, remarks that "the painting of the fifteenth century is located in the sphere where the extremes of the mystical and the crudely earthy easily touch one another. The faith that speaks here is so overt that no earthly depiction is too sensuous or too extreme for it."

This room of portraits is one of the most stupendous things you can see in an American museum, but in this show there is much more to come. The gallery devoted to studio practice is brilliantly done. A number of drawings lead up to the *Virgin and Child with Saints*, with its exposed preliminary drawing, and there is a whole wall of variants of Virgin and Child images by Dieric Bouts and Memling. After that comes what amounts to a small Gerard David retrospective, composed of the Met's incomparable holdings and some significant loans. Here the wit, the precision, and the narrative detail of Netherlandish art is given an Italianate volumetric ease.

David is one of the tenderest of great artists. He revels in the deliciousness of the mother-and-child relationship. The blue of the Virgin's clothing is a keynote in many paintings, a tone that seems to saturate the very air she breathes. From the Pierpont Morgan there is a wonderful illumination, *Virgin among Virgins*, with the Virgin and Child in front of a church, surrounded by the oddest of fantasies, an enormous assembly of sweetly chaste young women, extending as far as the eye can see.

Perhaps the single most fascinating work in this David group is a pair of tall landscapes, borrowed from the Mauritshuis in The Hague, which originally formed the exterior panels of the *Nativity* triptych (about 1510–15) in the Metropolitan's collection. These densely forested images, said to be the earliest pure landscapes that have come down to us, function as a prelude to the *Nativity*, and may signify a pre-Christian world, or the wanderings of the Holy Family. Whatever the particular meaning of the panels, they have a once-upon-a-time purity that seems to prefigure the entire history of the picturesque. David gives each leaf in the dense foliage a singular beauty. He suggests the excitement of a walk in the woods, where we brush up against nature and feel its powers so intimately.

In this superbly paced exhibition these panels are a crucial link, for they prepare us for the next gallery, where the key image is Joachim Patinir's triptych *The Penitence of Saint Jerome* (about 1518), in which the landscape has overtaken the figures, giving the lives of the Christian saints an almost Oriental sense that man is gladly sinking into the vastness of nature. And through the David diptych and the Patinir triptych we experience the gathering power of the landscape, which in the final gallery, where Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *Harvesters* (1565) is the focal point, becomes one of European art's very grandest themes.



JAN VAN EYCK, *THE CRUCIFIXION*, CIRCA 1430
courtesy The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Landscape had always been a vitalizing ingredient in Netherlandish painting, in vistas seen through windows or in the backgrounds of religious compositions or in the pictures illustrating the seasons in the medieval books of hours. With Bruegel's *Harvesters*, that medieval sense of man as lashed to the turning of the seasons blossoms into a sensation of almost pantheistic wonder. This is one of those rare paintings in which we feel as if we are seeing to the ends of the earth. Yet Bruegel loses none of the feeling for novelistic detail that had been one of the glories of Netherlandish painting since Robert Campin's day. He actually brings a new kind of low-down comedy into art, with the group of rough-and-ready farm workers who sit eating their meal beneath a great spreading tree. And we know how these hungry workers feel, because at the close of this show we also feel exhausted, ready to have something to eat or, like the man collapsed in the foreground, to take a well-earned nap.

This flawless show has a catalog to match, with a quartet of essays and extended entries that are designed with the needs of the sophisticated museumgoer in mind. Keith Christiansen—the Jayne Wrightsman Curator of European Painting at the Metropolitan, who organized the show with Maryan W. Ainsworth, Senior Research Fellow in Paintings Conservation—must be one of the few figures in the upper echelons of the museum world who have the encyclopedic intelligence, the scholarly perspicacity, and the intuitive feeling for the museumgoing experience that are needed to bring a project like this exhibition to such glorious fruition. The catalog rightly places considerable emphasis on the origins of the Metropolitan's own exemplary holdings. Julien Chapuis, in an essay on "Early Netherlandish Painting: Shifting Perspectives," locates the beginning of the modern fascination with this work in 1902, when a huge show was mounted in Bruges. Everett Fahy, writing about "How the Pictures Got Here," describes the great donors to the Metropolitan, who were often rather conventional collectors of old master paintings. But Fahy also reminds us that many of the dealers and the curators who

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guided the collectors were interested in much more than old masters, and viewed a taste for early Netherlandish painting as something distinctly modern, since it broke the stranglehold of Italianate taste.

Certain paintings in this show are among the most beloved masterworks in the Metropolitan, and it is worth asking why it is that New Yorkers have come to feel such a proprietary feeling for the Campin *Annunciation*, the Memling portraits, the Bruegel *Harvesters*. In part, I think, it is that the clarifying Northern light in Campin, van Eyck, Memling, Hugo, and Bruegel feels so very close to the tell-no-lies light of New York City. But there is more to this affinity, too.

In the early twentieth century, Netherlandish painting appealed to eyes that were already attuned to the freshness and the from-the-ground-up originality of Post-Impressionism. And if we take it for granted that New Yorkers have always embraced the new, then the rediscovery of early Netherlandish painting was right up their alley. I don't think that it was entirely an accident that the decade after World War II, when the entire complexion of art in New York was drastically changing, was also the decade when American scholars were redefining the very terms in which Netherlandish painting was understood.

In 1945, John Bernard Myers, who worked at the Surrealist magazine *View* and would a decade later be running Tibor de Nagy, one of the most important avant-garde galleries, wrote in his diary about his excitement at reading Erwin Panofsky, whose writing had been suggested by Meyer Schapiro in one of his New School classes. That same year, *The Art Bulletin* published, in a single issue, Schapiro's essay on the hidden symbolism in the Campin *Annunciation* and Millard Meiss's study of light in early Netherlandish painting. Two years later, in 1947–48, Panofsky gave his lectures on early Netherlandish painting at Harvard, and they were published in book form in 1953. Three years after that, the Metropolitan bought the Robert Campin altarpiece.

It is true that Jan van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden were not names that came up much in artists' discussions in the decade after the war. When an old master was mentioned, it was more likely to be Rembrandt or Piero. Still, we know that what interested Meyer Schapiro interested many New York artists, and I believe that the combination of bluntness and mysteriousness that Schapiro and Panofsky saw in early Netherlandish painting is relevant to Abstract Expressionism, too. In the postwar years, Schapiro, Panofsky, and Meiss were all convinced that the miraculously frank naturalism of early Netherlandish painting carried a greater freight of meaning than anybody ever imagined. A mousetrap in a carpenter's shop might suggest the way God baits the Devil; light flooding through a stained glass window symbolized the otherworldly penetration of Mary's womb. Surely the idea that objects and experiences had hidden meanings made perfect sense in a city where Freud's influence was at its zenith. And for the Abstract Expressionists, the thought that up-front images could be deeply, mysteriously encoded may well have sounded like an old idea with new potential.

Postwar American painting was often spoken about as being both frankly expressive and complexly symbolic—and this was exactly how the art historians were describing Netherlandish art. The still-life objects in the Campin *Annunciation* were regarded, like the brushstrokes in a de Kooning, as lasting records of immediate experience; but in both instances there was also supposed to be something going on beneath the surface. And all of this related to the experience of the city, where the daily onslaught could have lingering, enigmatic implications. No wonder, then, that when Edwin Denby, the poet, critic, and close friend of de Kooning's, returned to New York from Europe in 1954, he wrote that "down in the streets the color, the painted colors are like medieval color, like the green dress of the van Eyck double portrait in the National Gallery, intently local and intently lurid."

For many museumgoers, the Campin *Annunciation* and the Hugo portrait are as deeply knit into the fabric of New York as de Kooning's black and white abstractions. I think this goes some way toward explaining why "From Van Eyck to Bruegel" is being embraced so wholeheartedly by the hometown audience. For the Metropolitan, which like every major museum in the world today has in recent years gone overboard with blockbuster loan shows, this exhibit represents a remarkable (although by no means unique) decision to look inward.

In 1970, when the blockbuster was already a syndrome, John Hollander wrote a satirical poem about New York. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, he said,

> is ill:
> You can find pots and pictures in it still
> I guess, among the crowds who are lured in
> Not by the touching, bronze-age safety pin,
> The Dirck Bouts, or the Hellenistic head,
> Beauties and truths of the unending dead,
> But by the price-tag on the latest purchase.

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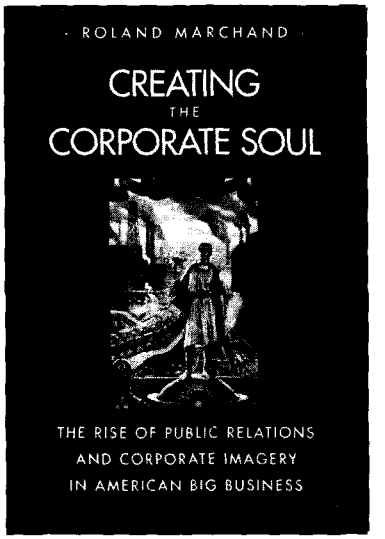
—Randall Rothenberg, author of *Where the Suckers Moon*



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Well, this fall people are flooding in to see work by Dieric Bouts, as well as by Campin and Memling and David. "From Van Eyck to Bruegel" takes us to the heart of a great American museum, where we find a distant Northern light that precisely matches the light we know from our own streets. In doing honor to the long-vanished art centers of Antwerp, Bruges, and Brussels, this amazing show also does honor to New York. •

Freedom and Charm

BY IAN BURUMA

Isaiah Berlin: A Life by Michael Ignatieff

(Metropolitan Books, 336 pp., $30)

Isaiah Berlin was a master of the anecdote. Most of his anecdotes were funny. Some were tinged with malice. All had a point. One of his favorites, often retold toward the end of a conversation, like a kind of coda to the brilliant flow of words that preceded it, was about Lewis Namier, the Polish-born historian who presented the English with a flatteringly Whiggish version of their history. The anecdote was one that Namier liked to tell himself. One day, so the story goes, Lord Derby asked Namier why he had never written the history of his own people, the Jewish people. Namier (in Berlin's growling imitation) recalled: "'Derby,' I said, 'the Jews don't have a history, but a martyrology, and that is not amusing.'" Lest one had missed the point, Berlin would repeat the words "'Derby,' I said," and look vastly amused.

The tale and its telling has many of the qualities that we have come to associate with Isaiah Berlin: the sensitive antennae for English social nuances and the outsider's efforts to fit in; the awe of English high society and the awareness of Jewish suffering; and above all the way of making an important point lightly. "Amusing" is the operative word. Berlin liked to be amusing as well as amused. It was part of his Oxford manner. Charm and the talent to amuse have always been highly prized at Oxford high tables, where heavy displays of learning are a sign of bad manners. Only bores and foreigners show off their cleverness in that way.

Isaiah Berlin was one of the most charming of dons. He was perhaps the most charming philosopher of the twentieth century. It is one reason why the British loved him. Berlin wanted to be loved, and yet he wanted to be more than an intellectual charmer, too. It worried him; he was suspicious of people who were too eager to please.

Some view the English attraction to charm with distrust. Evelyn Waugh thought that it was fatal for artistic creation. Auden said that it made him leave for America. Foreigners often see the English tendency to deflate intellectual earnestness with irony and wit as frivolousness, as a refusal to be serious. It is indeed hard to imagine a figure such as Maurice Bowra thriving in a German academic milieu, or indeed an American one. English charm can certainly be facile, and the Oxford "character" wearisome. Isaiah Berlin was keenly aware of being regarded in some circles as being merely a clever talker. (Paul Johnson, a man noted neither for his charm nor for his intellectual depth, took this view in a sour op-ed obituary of Berlin in *The New York Times*.)

In fact, Berlin's love of lightness and wit should not be mistaken for frivolousness. It matched his taste for Turgenev (instead of Dostoyevsky), or Mozart and Rossini (instead of Wagner). An ironic, even playful style; an aesthetic taste for worldliness, for what the eye can see or reason can comprehend, rather than for hidden metaphysical depths; a talent for the discursive essay rather than the heavy tome: all these traits point to a liberal and humane sense of proportion, to a keenness for clarity and for that other underrated quality in intellectual life, pleasure.

Michael Ignatieff has written a fine biography in the spirit of his subject. It is relatively short, filled with anecdotes culled from Berlin's table-talk. The book is light in the best sense: entertaining without ever lacking in seriousness. Ignatieff's subject was not a tortured genius, and so he has written the life of a man who was honored and loved, and who took grateful pleasure in his good fortune. Yet a lucky man does not make life easy for his biographer. Where is the drama, the *Sturm und Drang*, that offers readers vicarious thrills? Berlin's life was as bereft of storm and stress as his favorite subjects—the tormented German Romantics—were soaked in it. *Surtout pas trop de zèle*: Talleyrand's motto was his motto, too. He felt most at home in the privileged institutions of English gentlemanhood: All Souls, the Athenaeum, Albany. His friend Stephen Spender warned him, from the rough streets of Weimar Germany, that Oxford provided a "trap for people with brains," for if philosophy is studied only "by people who see nothing outside of Oxford, it will create a remote idealistic world which is quite as cloistered as the Church ever was."

And yet there *was* drama in Berlin's life, and he did manage to escape from the lulling shadows of Oxford's spires. At the age of seven, he witnessed the beginning of the Russian Revolution in St. Petersburg. The sight of a policeman, pale with fear, being dragged along by a frenzied mob left him with a horror of violence. It deepened, in Ignatieff's words, "his lifelong preference for all the temporising compromises that keep a political order safely this side of terror."

During World War II, Berlin was in Washington, where it was his job to inform London of American opinion and to bring America round to the British cause. He met Churchill and Einstein, Picasso and Freud, Pasternak and Kennedy—indeed, pretty much everyone who was anyone in Britain, Russia, Europe, and the United States. He was in Moscow during the last years of Stalin, and in Palestine during the British mandate, when an uncle, "Big Isaac" Landoberg, fought in the Jewish underground and became a famous soldier as Yitzhak Sadeh.

You could hardly wish for more interesting times. Yet Berlin felt more comfortable as a witness than as a participant. Einstein, who met Berlin in Princeton at the height of McCarthyism, remarked that Berlin seemed like "a spectator in God's big but mostly not very attractive theater." Except for his public hostility to Soviet tyranny, Berlin did not like to pronounce on political affairs. The fence was his favored place from which to view such contentious issues as the Vietnam War. By arguing that the United States should not have gone in, but then should not leave South Vietnam in the lurch, he satisfied nobody, including perhaps his biographer. (I think that Berlin's position was defensible.)

Berlin often felt caught between conflicting social and political loyalties. As a patriotic representative of the British

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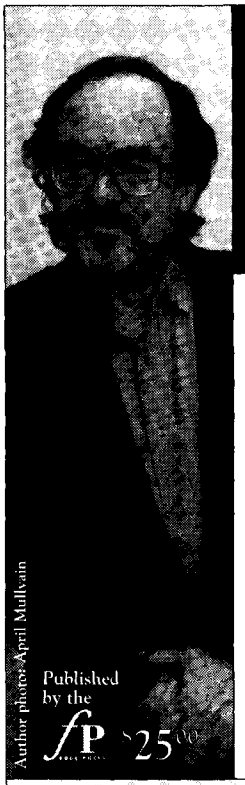
government, he had to defend pro-Arab policies on Palestine to the Zionists, whose views were closer to his own. At least on one occasion, he helped the Zionist cause by undermining the policy of his country. In 1943 he secretly tipped off George Backer, the publisher of a Zionist newspaper, that the British and American governments were about to issue a joint declaration condemning Zionist agitation and insisting that the Palestinian problem be postponed until the end of the war. He felt so uneasy about his divided loyalties that he kept quiet about this episode until he told Ignatieff about it toward the end of his life.

Ignatieff writes that Berlin was a liberal social democrat who was "more comfortable socially among Conservatives. He tried to have it both ways and, inevitably, this opened him to charges of being two-faced." Similarly, he was a Zionist who never felt at ease in Israel. Ignatieff quotes from a letter that Berlin wrote to Felix Frankfurter: "the trouble about the Israelis is not only their partly unconscious conviction born of experience that virtue always loses and only toughness pays, but a great provincialism and blindness to outside opinion."

He loved to be a figure in the grand houses and at the high tables of England, but he worried about the price of assimilation. He believed that ingratiation—the accommodating smile, the eagerness to please—was a typically Jewish sin, born of the self-delusion that one could "pass." So the inner life of Berlin was never as tranquil as his college and clubland surroundings. In the 1960s, Ignatieff tells us, Berlin felt like "a man beset: disliked by the left, held in suspicion by the right; too sceptical to be trusted by the committed; too committed to be at home among defenders of the status quo. He managed these conflicts with a gay, sardonic public surface; but underneath, he was often troubled with a sense, if not of tragedy, then certainly of the inevitability of losing someone or something dear whenever he made a commitment."

Ignatieff has taken Berlin's resolution of these dilemmas as the main theme of his book. Berlin's famous thesis on the two concepts of liberty, negative and positive, and the pluralism of human values was his way of solving his personal and political problems. His own experiences with Communism and, from a distance, with Nazism convinced him of the dangers inherent in positive liberty—the liberty of the state or any other authority to force people to conform to a blueprint of a utopia, which invariably turns out to be a hell.



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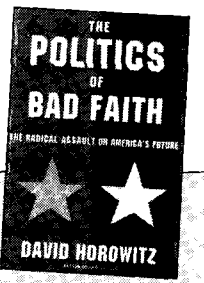

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In Berlin's account, political life and indeed private life are only rarely a matter of choosing between good and evil. More often the choice is between two relative goods. And whichever one plumps for, something will be lost in the bargain: there will be more equality and less freedom, or vice versa. Berlin himself lived a life of incommensurability. As Ignatieff writes, his deepest commitments were frequently in conflict, and their resolution was painful and protracted. "This helps to explain the unique acuteness with which he zeroed in on the Enlightenment fallacy that each of us harboured a single, unproblematic inner nature from which our values and our interests could be deduced."

How conservative was Berlin's liberalism? His critics on the left have described Berlin's advocacy of negative freedom as a typical example of conservative Anglophilia: the defense of laissez-faire and a minimum of state intervention. Perry Anderson made the case that Berlin, like Hayek and Popper, acted as an apologist for the British status quo, whereas more radical spirits among the European émigrés tended to move to America.

There is some truth to this. Berlin was a self-confessed Anglophile. He loved the English institutions that took him in. Like many people wrenched from their native land, he longed to find refuge and a home. Ignatieff quotes from a letter that Berlin wrote to Spender in 1935, explaining his fondness for the arcane rituals of Oxford life. He hated to be uprooted: "Consequently I passionately defend all small societies, fixed disciplines etc. which merely rationalises my love of the womb I expect (a womb with a view, a womb of one's own etc.)." Many years later, he wrote to another friend how much he hated change in his life.

Arthur Koestler once called England a Davos for the battered veterans of European tyrannies. A Jewish ex-Communist in flight from the Nazis, he knew what he was talking about. The idea of England as a comfortable if somewhat dreary refuge from Continental absolutism was also held by some of Berlin's heroes who survived the failed revolutions of 1848, in particular Alexander Herzen and Giuseppe Mazzini. Ignatieff expresses some surprise at Berlin's enthusiasm for such "un-English stuff," but it is not really surprising. Wearied by his brushes with Slavophiles, Czarists, Communards, and Communists, Herzen enjoyed the negative liberties of England. He settled for a while in the London suburb of Putney, calling himself the "old Putney man," reading *The Times* every morning and drinking ale at his local pub. And Mazzini, a more excitable figure, also used England as a great armchair, when he wasn't busy liberating Italy.

AVIGDOR ARIKHA, *ISAIAH BERLIN*, 1995

What attracted such people to England was precisely the lack of a great, rationalist blueprint for collective human progress. Both Mazzini and Herzen had been susceptible to such blueprints abroad; but in England you could take a breather. Typical Anglophilia, then, is both liberal, in the original sense of the word, and conservative.

Ignatieff rightly calls Berlin a Humean skeptic. Hume, in Berlin's words, "believed in custom, the belief of sensible men of all ages, but not in indubitable general propositions. He was politically a conservative, a Tory, not a Whig. He did not believe in absolute doctrines: he was anti-Cromwell, and no more than Burke believed in a priori principles." Hume attacked Locke for his belief that government was only legitimate if citizens agreed to obey its laws by "social contract." This showed, in Hume's opinion, a dangerous and naïve disregard for history, custom, and culture. After all, Hume argued, people have no choice in the place they are born. So the way they are governed is a matter of historical luck.

To a refugee from violent revolution, the English must have looked like a very lucky people, and Berlin defended their traditions with a Humean passion. He recognized and prized the cultural diversity of nations. That is why he could see merit in such German idealists as Herder and Hamann, whose promotion of national culture that grows in native soil, like ancient trees, was much influenced by Hume. He may not have agreed with their nativism, but he shared their distrust of universalism.

It is easy to accept Hume's and Berlin's rejection of absolute doctrines. Humean conservatism is an attractive tool with which to defend decent institutions. And from the perspective of an Oxford college or a London club, there is indeed much worth conserving. But what about those already living under a tyranny? Then the choices become starker, and appeals to tradition and customs less helpful. It is often the tyrants and their advocates who justify their rule by claiming the imprimatur of tradition. China has never had a democracy; and when Henry Kissinger, among others, describes foreign criticism of Chinese authoritarianism as arrogant attacks on an ancient civilization, he is speaking as a Humean. Is it dangerously naïve of Chinese rebels to act in the spirit of Locke and demand democratic institutions?

Culture and politics are linked, of course. And yet we should be careful not to confuse them. Isaiah Berlin was a rational thinker who saw the limits of rationalism. Indeed, in some respects he recognized the uses of irrationalism. Not himself a religious believer, he

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nonetheless took religion seriously. He liked to call himself "a lapsed heretic." He observed the High Holidays and favored orthodoxy in religious ceremonies (such as his own funeral). This is partly because he believed in the usefulness of tradition; but there was more to it. It was precisely because he was a man of reason that Berlin saw no point in pretending that something as unreasonable as faith should be dressed up as rational.

There was one subject, though, about which Berlin could be truly irrational, and I think it throws some light on the confusion between politics and culture. He was irrational in his criticism of German Jews, of the assimilationist, educated German Jews who were the greatest defenders of German *Kultur*—in the finest Humean tradition, one might say. His pet hatred was Hannah Arendt.

There are good reasons to be critical of the snobbery of German Jews, and their habitual disdain of the *Ostjuden* "who give Jews a bad name." Thus Berlin could not forgive Arendt for proposing that European Jews might have resisted the Nazis more effectively. This struck him as pure German-Jewish arrogance, voiced from the safe shores of Manhattan. Perhaps the fact that Berlin himself had not been aware of the Holocaust while spending the war in Washington gave his rage a keener edge.

Berlin knew that Jews were being massacred, and he knew there were concentration camps; but despite his daily contact with Jewish organizations, and despite the fact that gas chambers were mentioned in news reports on the BBC, he claims not to have realized the full extent of the horror. He felt ashamed of this after the war. Perhaps some of the shame spilled over into anger, against Hannah Arendt or against Herbert Marcuse, who, in an absurd but not untypical piece of left-wing cant, opined that the Nazi camps were "in a sense the quintessence ... of the infernal society to which we are plunged every day." Berlin ranted about the milieu from which Marcuse came, "the terrible twisted *Mitteleuropa* in which nothing is straight, simple, truthful," sounding like an old-fashioned John Bull, speaking for roast beef and old England.

What Berlin couldn't stand about the German Jews of *Mitteleuropa* was their Wagnerianism, their attempts to fit in by being, as it were, more German than the Germans. Yet how different was their Germanness from Berlin's own Englishness? Wasn't his own lifelong defense of British institutions, Anglo-Saxon liberalism, Oxford traditions, and so on, similar to the German-Jewish championing of German humanism, philosophy, and music? Was the typical German-Jewish desire to be rooted in their German *Kultur* any more absurd or misguided than Berlin's wish for the same racination in England?

In one respect, of course, it was. Culture, however well-absorbed, does not offer protection against tyranny and persecution. Beethoven, Wagner, and Goethe could not help the Jews when the bricks crashed through their windows and the mob bayed for their blood. Jews have done better in Britain not because of charming English customs, or because of Shakespeare, or because of the love of British Gentiles for Jews. They owe their security and their prosperity in England to its liberal political system, which holds tyranny in check and affords people the necessary luxury of being able to choose between conflicting goods. Berlin's defense of that system was not just a matter of wanting to fit in. It was a matter of survival; and from that standpoint, too, the political liberalism of Mill was more desirable than the cultural idealism of Herder and Wagner.

And yet the idea of belonging, of being at ease with one's own kind, whose language, jokes, and references are naturally understood, continued to nag him. Berlin believed in Israel, because he believed that Jews could only feel really at ease in their own state. The same Perry Anderson who called Berlin an apologist for the British establishment also argued that national identity politics was Berlin's true domain, owing to his interest in Zionism. Maybe; but I'm not sure that Berlin ever identified wholly with any particular national identity.

To pin him down as a Russian, a Zionist, an Oxford man, an Englishman, or a Jew does not do him justice. He was all these things, but his loyalties were both wider and narrower. His deepest loyalties were finally to particular people, always in a minority in their different nations, who stood up for ideals—call it an idea of civilization—in which Berlin believed. Ignatieff's description of Berlin's encounter with Anna Akhmatova, keeping the flame of Russian literature alive in defiance of state terror, is the most beautiful thing in his book. He was always and in everything a humanist. One of the last things that Berlin said to me, not long before his death, was that he wanted to fly to Israel just to shake the hands of his liberal friends who continued to believe that Palestinians no less than Jews had a right to feel at home and be free.

IAN BURUMA is a fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. His new book, *Anglomania*, will be published by Random House this spring.

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Culture Wars

By Anthony Pagden

Conquests and Cultures: An International History by Thomas Sowell

(Basic Books, 493 pp., $35)

Thomas Sowell believes in "civilization." He may not be the last person in the Western world to do so, but there cannot be many who assume the term to be so uncomplicated. For Sowell, it is obvious that "civilization" is that way of life lived by the peoples of the European world and its former settler populations, technologically sophisticated, literate and productive of literature, organized according to the rule of law, and so on. More specifically, it is the way of life lived in Great Britain from roughly the late eighteenth century on, and therefore, of course, in the United States. Civilization is something to be desired by all peoples everywhere, something toward which all peoples, whether they know it or not, are struggling in their own often stumbling and homicidal ways.

Sowell does not offer a definition of civilization, for his book is not, as he states at the outset, a work with any pretense to the "elegance of abstract theoretical models." Instead it provides the facts (lots of them) of which, in his view, all true history should be composed. Those who declare themselves to be free of the taint of theory are usually attempting to demonstrate that what they believe simply corresponds to the way the world is, and Sowell is no exception. Although he speaks of "civilizations" in the plural and, at the very end of the book, quotes approvingly Fernand Braudel's observation that we may only now be witnessing the transition from civilizations in the plural to "civilization in the singular," it is obvious that Sowell can only really accept the existence of one civilization.

Historically, in a narrow sense, he is about right. "Civilization"—the term was coined by either a Scotsman, Adam Ferguson, or a Frenchman, the Marquis de Mirabeau, toward the end of the eighteenth century—is clearly the product of the moral and political values unique to the Greco-Roman world and its heirs. On this account, non-Europeans, however skilled or refined, cannot be truly "civilized." But the term was also coined to capture a prevailing assumption about the nature of the differences between the European and the non-European world. As Johnson told Boswell, this neologism was the ideal antinomy to "barbarism." It is very much in this sense that Sowell, in his untheoretical and imprecise lucubrations, uses it.

A similar murkiness shrouds Sowell's conception of "culture." At least since 1871, when the Victorian ethnologist E.B. Tylor published *Primitive Culture*, "culture" has been employed to capture the conventional, normative aspects of our collective life—what Tylor himself famously described as "a most complex whole" made up of "knowledge, belief, law, morals, custom." Civilization may be singular, but culture can only be plural. "Civilization" is, historically, a European self-description, but all peoples, no matter what their ethnic origins, have cultures.

In recent decades, "culture" has escaped from anthropology and sociology, where it was once confined, to almost every area of public life. Now we have political culture, popular culture, the culture of fear, the culture of hope. We have even had—and in some places we continue to have—"culture wars." All of these uses would seem to be distinct from, say, the culture of the Hausa or the culture of the Hopi, which are distinct again from that "culture" that made Goering reach for his gun. Given the lingering imprecision of the term, it might have helped if Sowell had provided a clearer understanding of what he means by it.

Conquests and Cultures is the last of a trilogy that began with *Race and Culture* in 1994 and continued with *Migrations and Cultures* in 1996. In each of those volumes, Sowell tells us, he has insisted on the claim that "racial, ethnic, and national groups have their own respective cultures, without which their economic and social histories cannot be understood." This is, as he admits, a modest claim. Beneath it, however, lurks a rather less modest intent.

We are told in *Race and Culture* that "culture" is not what "social science" currently takes it to be, namely "doctrines which make the surrounding environment the shaper of groups' behavior and institutional decisions the arbiters of their fate." (Sowell wisely attributes these dogmas to "social science," since it would be hard to find a social scientist today prepared to subscribe to any such view.) In *Migrations and Cultures*, cultures are described broadly as "particular ways of accomplishing the things that make life possible—the perpetuation of the species, the transmission of knowledge, and the absorption of the shocks of change and death among other things." In *Conquests and Cultures*, where neither sex nor death nor passion nor belief plays any significant role, we are told that cultures are not "museum-pieces." Instead they are likened to pieces of machinery, whose operators jettison or improve them at will according to simple functional criteria of efficiency and modernity.

In some respects, then, Sowell looks more like an old-fashioned Marxist than the Friedmanian rational-choice theorist that he would probably wish to be seen as. (In fairness, Friedman's view of what might be described as cultural choice is a great deal more nuanced than Sowell's.) And cultures, in Sowell's account, are not only functionalist in this way; they are also meta-forces which may affect the "social fates of nations and civilizations," though quite how is never made clear.

Sowell might have stopped for a moment in his lumber room of facts to reflect on the prolonged struggle in nineteenth-century German literature between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, and on Nietzsche's judgment that "civilization means something else than culture, something which is its opposite." *Kultur* described all those essentially non-oppressive human activities—music, literature, painting, and so on, the things that made Goering's trigger finger itchy. Civilization, by contrast, was the mechanistic, dehumanizing perception of technological progress which drove the modern German state.

What Sowell has tried to do, in other words, is what Nietzsche most abominated: he has made *Kultur* identical with *Zivilisation*. If all cultures are, at bottom, functional entities, stripped of virtually all the non-rational components of which most anthropologists have assumed them to be composed, then it would seem that the one which works best must be superior to all others, and the one which works best will clearly be the only "civilization." True, Sowell claims in his conclusion that the efficiency of each culture must be "judged

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by those individuals deciding for themselves what to retain and what to discard in the light of their own experience"; but this should not be taken as a concession toward the possibility that other peoples might pursue their own ends in other ways.

For, as Sowell says at the very beginning of this book, it, like the others in the trilogy, "collides head-on with prevailing doctrines about 'celebrating' and preserving cultural differences." (It is characteristic of his work that he nowhere explains what he thinks these "doctrines" are.) The "light of experience" therefore operates within a very narrow compass indeed. Some cultures are simply more advanced or backward than others. And these progressions and regressions are measured, sometimes explicitly, sometimes not, against the conditions prevalent in Western Europe and the United States.

Thus the Germanic tribes who invaded Britain after the withdrawal of the Roman legions—the "barbarians," as Sowell calls them—did not discard a carefully maintained network of roads and the heating systems in patrician villas because such things were "inefficient" in their culture, which did not practice slavery on a massive scale as the Romans did. They did so, in Sowell's view, because they were simply too unskilled to maintain the technologies that their predecessors had bequeathed to them.

Like postcolonial African and Asian states, who similarly failed to continue the high standards of living (Sowell's shorthand for cultural efficiency) practiced by the European settlers, the Germanic conquerors were "retrogressive." About modern Africa and modern Asia, as about ancient Britain, Sowell seems to assume that inferior cultures, once their more efficient masters have departed, can only revert to "technological breakdowns, failing economies, and political chaos."

Throughout this book and its predecessors, Sowell's objective is to demonstrate in this way that the distribution of what he calls "human capital" across the world has resulted in the emergence of one dominant, because vastly more efficient, culture. It is here represented largely by "British" culture, which will, in time, come to replace all others. The methods by which this conclusion has been achieved throughout the trilogy have been varied. In his new book, Sowell's concern is with the role played by military expansion and conquest in shaping "the language, the economy, and the moral universe" of the modern world. Conquest, when the conqueror is "technologically or organizationally more advanced" than the conquered, is a means of "spreading the existing human capital of mankind."

If the conqueror is intellectually and technologically inferior, then conquest may lead to "catastrophic retrogression" and to the, albeit temporary, annihilation of "civilization." In general, though, Sowell is fairly upbeat about the history of military expansion. For if there have been setbacks, and not all of them temporary—it took centuries for "medieval Europe to recover the standard of living it had once enjoyed in Roman times"—it is obvious that, in the long run, the more efficient cultures will prove to be the most successful military ones, too. The Aztecs may have had an empire which, like the empire of the Mongols (no European group is ever chosen for comparison in this way), "used terror as a weapon to demoralize their enemies and keep the subjected peoples in line," but it could not withstand the spread of "human capital" represented by the *conquistadores* of the empire of Charles V of Spain. The same held true of Africa, much of Asia, and the other regions of the Americas. Faced with the superior technologies of the Europeans, the aboriginal peoples of these places rapidly succumbed, becoming further beneficiaries of the inexorable spread of more "human capital," though they may not

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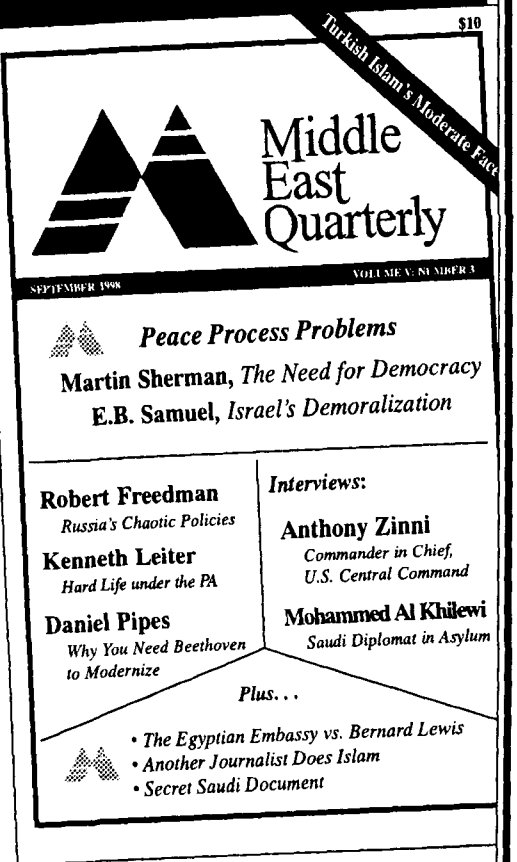

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have recognized the benefits at once.

On this account, all humans, no matter what differences might separate them from one another, have had to move up a scale that would take them inexorably from "barbarism" to "civilization." It is a familiar enough argument. It has sometimes been ascribed to "the Enlightenment," and it was, broadly speaking, Adam Smith's view of history, as it was Gibbon's, Montesquieu's, and Jefferson's. This view has also been detected—by their beneficiaries, and sometimes also by their victims—in the projects sponsored by the international monetary agencies, and in the policies of the liberal democracies of the developed world toward the underdeveloped world.

It is, of course, a dire form of ethnocentrism, in that its universalism is really a doctrine of the eligibility of the entire human world for European improvement. It excoriates, by implication, all values that are not European, or it regards them merely as phases in a historical progress that will one day bring all the peoples of the world to accept the values of one of the regions of the world. It is also not a view which has been much in vogue among intellectuals in the past fifty years or so. Sowell is resurrecting an ancient orthodoxy.

It may be that there exist people in the West who have never had their faith in progress shaken by the two world wars, the genocides of fascism and communism, the staggeringly bloody processes of colonization and decolonization, the proliferation of nuclear weapons; who view the undeniable achievements of the West without any accompanying sense of tragedy, or irony, or moral complication. There are certainly those who, like Sowell, would dismiss the fierce onslaught upon the complacency of liberal democracies in the face of the huge discrepancy in "standards of living" between the "North" and the "South" as merely the dogmas of "social science."

In Sowell's world, however, such scruples and such complexities are, in the long run, merely epiphenomenal, mere byways in a history whose final stages we—we in the civilized West, that is—are currently experiencing. Other cultures may then be ranged according to their proximity to the ideal Western type, from the barbarous Africans and American Indians, to the somewhat less-than-civilized Slavs, and finally to the truly civilized Europeans. (This may be why the courage of Britain is praised for resisting Hitler, but the Red Army's role in destroying him is passed over in silence. A people characterized here as one who have "historically lagged behind the peoples of Western Europe in technology, economic well-being, education, and other indices of development" were surely incapable of the same degree of valor as the British.)

In an attempt to provide empirical support for these assumptions, Sowell's book plods its weary way through the supposed cultural features of four groups of peoples: the British, the Africans, the Slavs, and the "Western Hemisphere Indians." These portraits sometimes verge on parody. The British, of course, are very fond of freedom, which they bequeathed to the settler population in America. The Irish are given to "fighting and widespread alcoholism." The Africans would seem to be a generally murderous lot who, instead of putting their own house in order (which would presumably consist of reverting to the "cultures" of their former European masters), persist in blaming "the departed imperialists, or racial minorities such as the Indians or even the United States" for their current misfortunes. The Slavs were an illiterate and rapacious race of horsemen who "had no literature at all until written versions

The Search for Lorca's Shadow

I've seen the hillside. A soft wind moved
through the leaves of the olive trees. Yes,
this is a poem about historic death,
it would be incomplete without hillsides
thick with olive trees, their leaves turning
silver as the land wind shivers them.
The earth, by which I mean the soil, the dirt,
is a metallic gray covered here and there
by a loamy dust which may or may not
shift in the breeze. The ants come and go
doing their dull work. They are alive,
they are going about the business
of their lives, building their dwellings,
providing, eating as best they can.
They do not remember the victim.
They did not even know his name, his voice
which rings still in the voices of others,
his dark hair fallen across one eye,
his rages and jealousies, his body
clothed in worn cotton garments sewn by hand.
(Were he alive he could look carefully
at the bloodstained shirt, count the stitches
that attached the cuffs, and tell you, "No,
that is not the work of my grandmother.")
Forgive the ants, they are merely ants,
though they are live and he is not,
though they would surely eat him if they could,
if in fact anything were left to eat—
the bones are here as clean as porcelain,
for the earth has long ago eaten all
there was to eat. First forgive the ants
or we'll get nowhere in this useless search
for the darkness he was and the darkness
he became. It is August. The noon sun
pours down on this merciless landscape
that watched with its thousand eyes hidden
in the gashed trunks and the undersides
of gray stones and did nothing. Someone
wrote, "The crime was in Granada,"
though actually it was here among ants,
stones, dust, olive trees, fallen fruit, the boots
of armed men, the cries of women and men
where now there is only silence and no
darkness we can say is his, Federico's.

Philip Levine

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of Slavic languages were developed by scholars from other countries."

Why he chose these groups and not, say, the Tamils, the Nilotes, the Bengalis, and the Malays is not explained. Nor is there an explanation given—the reasons are evident enough—for why the British deserve a section to themselves but all the aboriginal peoples of Africa and America are lumped together under one heading. Such general categories are, in any case, remarkably crude. Indeed, at the end of *Race and History*, Sowell warned against using abstractions such as "the British" since such terms "refer to radically different people living under radically different circumstances." He seems largely to have forgotten his own warning.

There is one obvious thing, though, that all these groups share: they all have cultures which have conquered and been conquered in their turn. All peoples in Sowell's view are equally given to coveting the goods of their neighbors—and their neighbors themselves—and to seizing them if they can. All peoples, in his view, are also beastly to one another if given the opportunity. He knows, for instance, that the American Indians behaved "brutally, greedily, and with arrogance" toward those they were able to conquer "long before Columbus' ships first appeared on the horizon," as if the harshness of the conqueror is not a trait that transcends cultures. He knows that the Maori treated the peoples of the Chatham Islands with no less—and possibly more—brutality than they had themselves received at the hands of the British, and that the Zulus visited hideous atrocities on their prisoners.

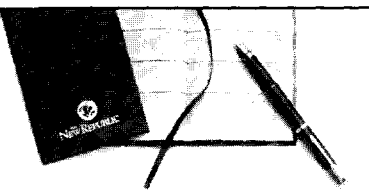
Sowell is quite right to resist the current sentimentalization of aboriginal peoples. Some of those groups that used to be described as "non-surplus-producing" may have established a relationship with their environment, and with their neighbors, which did not involve either expropriation or destruction; but they must be very few. The current image of the American Indian as living in an untroubled and harmonious relationship with nature and with other fellow humans before the arrival of the Europeans is about as probable as Diderot's glowing description of the Tahitians—and serves much the same cultural ends.

Brutality is certainly not the prerogative of Sowell's advanced civilizations, even if they have been rather more refined, and greatly more effective, in their uses of it. It is worth noting, however, that the only detailed accounts of brutality in *Conquests and Cultures* are of atrocities committed by peoples whom Sowell considers to be "uncivilized." No description is offered of Nazi concentration camps—though they are described as setting "new lows for brutality and dehumanization"—to match those provided for the Maori conquest of the Chatham Islands, or the Zulu slaughter of British troops after the battle of Isandhlwana.

At times Sowell sounds as if he were merely swapping atrocity stories with the relativists and the other champions of cultural difference whom his book is intended to refute. But in truth he is advancing a bolder, and more dubious, claim. For although the Europeans might have been just as unpleasant in some ways as the Maori and the American Indians, their superior culture, their civilization, has always led to the creation of more humane societies—more humane, because more "efficient." They, and they alone, have been able to create the strong government which is the only means of restraining the more unpleasant aspects of the universal human character.

In Sowell's view, it was the rise of powerful nation-states—a phenomenon supposedly unknown outside the West—which led to the abolition of slavery. It was, therefore, the Europeans who abolished slavery in Asia in the nineteenth century, and who "forced back the frontiers of slavery" in Africa in the twentieth. That it was these same states which had been responsible for slavery—if not for its creation, then certainly for its expansion from a local business to an international trade of unprecedented proportions—seems to have escaped his learned attention.

Conquests and Cultures, as will by now be obvious, is a generally triumphalist and highly determinist book. Still, for all this, Sowell conducts his arguments in what appears to be a reasonable and balanced manner. His opponents, though he never mentions them by name, never discusses any one of their writings, are not so much excoriated as chided for what he clearly sees as their persistent failure to recognize the truth revealed by an honest presentation—his presentation—of "the facts." The trouble with such a courteous approach is that, even in refuting them, it never allows his potential critics any real voice. Thus Sowell adduces the findings of Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* as if they have been met with no controversy or criticism. The objections raised against *The Bell Curve* concerned precisely its uncritical assumption of highly debatable statistics, and its unfounded opinion masquerading as



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objective data; but Sowell accepts what endorses his views as simple "fact."

Sowell's interpretations are hampered by the sheer poverty of the historical research on which they are based. Much of his evidence comes from odd places. His assessment of pre-Roman Britain is derived from Winston Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*, which few would regard as the last word on the subject. Neither would G.M. Trevelyan's *English Social History*, which dates from the early 1940s, seem to be the most obvious source for the social structure of the Tudor household. A writer who claims to be confounding the "social sciences" by his deployment of facts should perhaps derive those facts from more substantial works than *An Illustrated Cultural History of England*, or Paul Johnson's hysterical *Modern Times: A History of the World from the 1920s to the 1990s*. And while it is heartening to find Gibbon being cited as an authority on Roman Britain, it does not say much for the contemporaneity of Sowell's scholarship.

Obviously those are not the only works that he has consulted, but even when there is evidence of somewhat more systematic research, it is disconcerting to find that, in a work which describes itself as "an international history," all of it is in English. Sowell's belief in the unqualified desirability of European cultural values and European technologies is tenacious, but exposure to a more up-to-date, more reflective, and more critical historiography might at least have given him pause. It might have saved him, say, from the assumption that in the states of the former British empire the "line of demarcation ... between free people and those living under various forms of despotism" "largely coincided" with the line between those who "preserved British governmental structures or principles, or the freedom based on them," or from the bizarre claim that Britain's role in the abolition of the slave trade was somehow a causal factor in her emergence as the supposed leader of the "Industrial Revolution."

A knowledge of linguistics more sophisticated than that (apparently) offered by Jean W. Sedlar's *East Central Europe in the Middle Ages* might have saved Sowell from the muddle implicit in the claim that the "Slavic languages ... lacked the ability to express as complex and sophisticated ideas as such classical languages as Latin or Greek." A better understanding of the vast and still-growing literature on colonialism, and on the history and the anthropology of developmental economics, might have spared him from such conceptually embarrassing remarks as "if 'exploitation' theories were as widely applicable as supposed, then the dissolution of empires should lead to rising standards of living among the formerly conquered and presumably exploited peoples. Yet history repeatedly shows the opposite happening."

Sowell's book ends with the vision of a "common world culture, shared by at least the educated people of every continent." This would appear to be the final stage in the progress from barbarism to civilization, in which science and "civilization" have subsumed all other significant areas of human activity. If, as Sowell claims, this would "offer ... an opportunity for better mutual understanding," it might be given a cautious welcome; except that it is very doubtful that such would really be the case. Sowell's enthusiasm somewhat resembles (not surprisingly, in the light of his technologism) the faith of Adam Smith and others in the eighteenth century in the pacifying and civilizing role of commerce. As Hume pointed out, however, commerce could become merely the pursuit of war by other means.

Human competitiveness—and human nastiness, which is not exactly culture-specific—is unlikely to be erased by the universal dissemination of what Sowell calls "ideas of personal freedom and other concepts once peculiar to Western civilization." There is also something skewed in his belief—which can only derive from his almost complete failure to consider Asia as anything other than simply the beneficiary of Western science—that it is, in fact, these values which have led to the triumph of Western "culture." A glance at Japan, in which "ideas of personal freedom" play no role at all in the successful deployment and development of Western technologies, or at Singapore or South Korea, bumps and all, would perhaps have shown him that "Westernization" is compatible with a large number of cultural forms.

Sowell's world culture is an inversion of the traditional cosmopolitan dream. That dream was of a world community which would be capable of abolishing political and economic differences, of assuring "an opportunity for better mutual understanding" between peoples while still preserving their cultural diversity. For Sowell, however, cultural diversity cannot be distinguished from political and economic inequalities. For him, what Kant called the "cosmopolitan law" can only be achieved under a single cultural, political, and economic form. (Kant himself, it should be said, shared some of Sowell's convictions: the cosmopolitan order, which was the highest condition to which the human race could aspire, would be realizable only in a world of what he called "republics" and we might describe as liberal democracies.) In this way Sowell's books merely confirm what all opponents of modern cosmopolitanism have said of it: that it is, in one guise or another, a reaffirmation of the ancient European aspiration to world domination.

In this regard, *Conquests and Cultures* is not terribly interesting, except as evidence that a surprisingly large number of people seem to share its author's undifferentiated and unblemished view of the blandishments and the consequences of Western technology. Still, poorly researched and badly argued as it is, Sowell's book raises some urgent questions. For he is right about one thing: cultures are not "museum-pieces." They develop, they change, they are porous. There can be no culture in the world today, beyond the protected peoples of the Brazilian rainforest, that is not the result of prolonged borrowings and periodic inventions and reinventions. And Sowell is right about something else, too. Cultures are not as incommensurable as some anthropologists and social scientists have maintained. If they were, there would be no possibility of one human group understanding another human group. Neither would any one culture offer a temptation or pose a threat to any other.

The hope that the erasure of political and economic differences can be achieved while maintaining cultural difference must be, therefore, to some degree an illusion. But to what degree? Those cultures that share a relatively stable political and economic life have nothing to fear from—as they have nothing to gain by—Sowell's common world culture. In Europe itself, ever-closer political and economic union has resulted in a certain superficial cultural reciprocity. The English now drink more wine than they did, eat squid, and keep their shops open past five in the afternoon. The French wear tweed and eat mozzarella and sun-dried tomatoes, and everyone everywhere drinks espresso and cappuccino. But this has not led to a uniformity of culture, as some had feared; it has led to a richer diversity. For nobody, on spending even a few minutes in London, Paris, or Rome, despite evidence of certain similarities of lifestyle, could fail to recognize that they were in very different cultures indeed. Even the McDonalds and the Pizza Huts do not eclipse the sense of difference, the feeling of place.

Yet the problem of cultural particularity becomes more acute when there exist great inequalities, political and economic, between cultures. The true

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cosmopolitan may not, like Sowell, look upon "group differences" as "so colorful and delightful in theory" but "all too often ... bitter and lethal in practice." But often those differences do become radically incompatible, and do result in "bitter and lethal" conflict. How should the true cosmopolitan regard them? For Sowell, of course, the answer is obvious: sooner or later these peoples are bound to be absorbed into the mainstream of the superior Western nations by which most of them were once colonized.

But the problem cannot be resolved so tidily or so coercively. It is true that the world in which we live is a world dominated by the products of Western science; but culture is not so easily or so necessarily reduced to technology. Just as the Japanese can adjust to being the world leaders in information technology without ceasing to be Japanese, so the Inuit can adjust to the snowmobile and the rifle without losing touch with whatever it is that binds them together. For cultures are not monoliths. They are fragmentary, patchworks of autochthonous and foreign elements. They are genuinely old and genuinely new. And so there is no reason why Sowell's "inferior" cultures should not be able to establish their own identities without linking those identities to economies and modes of government that set them at odds with a world dominated by Western economies.

To insist that one's culture is to be determined by initiation rites created for the needs of a warrior society that no longer exists, or by a religious law devised for a largely nomadic people, or by the origin narratives of an ancient pastoral tribe, is to take a very narrow and impoverished view of what one's culture can achieve. Indeed, this is one of the internal contradictions of Sowell's trilogy. For him, Western culture is dynamic and forever changing, but the cultures of those who have defective "standards of living" are described as if they were stagnant and unmoving, capable of change only when they have been wrenched into movement by contact with European technologies and European values. Yet if European "civilization" is truly based upon universal values, intelligible and desirable to all peoples everywhere, then these values must not only be recognizable by all as universal, they must also be attainable without assistance from outside. Universal values are universal values.

It is probably the case that no culture, no "civilization," no autonomous nation can survive for long outside the limits of "global capitalism," and outside some kind of quasi-democratic system which

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100 Years of Zionism and 50 Years of Israel
What Can the World Learn from It?

In 1894, Theodor Herzl, an Austrian Jewish journalit, was assigned to cover the Dreyfus trial in France. Seeing this Jewish officer being railroaded to a life sentence led him to the recognition that life for Jews in Europe was untenable and that the solution of the "Jewish problem" lay in the establishment of a Jewish state.

What are the facts?

The Birth of a Dream. The return to Zion had for 2,000 years been the dream of Europe's dispersed Jews. "Next year in Jerusalem" had always been the watchword. But nothing was done to bring this dream to reality. Theodor Herzl organized the first Zionist Congress in Basel (Switzerland) in 1897 and political Zionism was born.

The concept of creating a new nation in what was then a sparsely-settled country was something never before attempted in the history of mankind. But Herzl's vision fired up world Jewry and especially the Jews of eastern Europe, who were despairing under the yoke of Russian oppression. Energized by Zionist aspirations, British Foreign Secretary Lord Balfour issued his famous Declaration in 1917, by which Palestine was established as a national home for the Jewish people. In 1922, the League of Nations entrusted Britain with the Mandate for Palestine. Regrettably, Britain decided that the requirements for setting up a Jewish national home would not apply east of the Jordan River. That area constituted three-fourths of the territory of the Mandate. Only one-quarter of Palestine remained to fulfill the Jewish dream.

A Nation is Born and Succeeds. The modern state of Israel was founded in May 1948—fifty years after Herzl formulated the concept. Immediately the country was invaded by five Arab armies. With a total Jewish population of only about 650,000, and with limited armaments and resources, the ragtag army of Israel defeated the combined might of the aggressors and established itself firmly within its boundaries. Jordan stayed in possession of Judea/Samaria (now known as the "West Bank") and the eastern part of Jerusalem. Egypt occupied the Gaza Strip. The price was very high. In this bloodiest of wars imposed on Israel, over 6,000 citizen-soldiers died -- over 1% of the population. In the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel once again prevailed; it repossessed Judea/Samaria, the eastern part of Jerusalem, and conquered the vast Sinai Peninsula and the Golan Heights. And once more, in 1973, the Arabs tried to destroy Israel in the Yom Kippur War. Once more, they suffered defeat.

Despite being under constant attack and siege and having suffered over 20,000 dead in those defensive wars, Israel created social and political systems and an economy that continues to amaze experts worldwide. Israel is the only truly democratic country in the entire Middle East, with governmental structure and institutions comparable to those of the United States. Its economy—despite the enormous defense expenditures mandated by the aggressiveness of its neighbors and despite the effort and expense of having absorbed more than 2.5 million immigrants (four times the population at the creation of the state)—can only be described as a miracle of human accomplishment. Virtually the entire infrastructure had to be built from a minimal base. Today, Israel's economy is booming. It is a leader in high-tech technology; it has created one of the most advanced agricultural systems in the world; it is one of world leaders in economic growth rate; it has one of the highest per-capita incomes in the world; and it is the world leader in exports per capita.

> "One would think that emerging nations would wish to learn from Israel's example. But the opposite is the case."

We have in this century seen the demise of many "isms", the most prominent failures being those of Communism and Naziism. But Zionism has flourished to an extent that the visionary Theodor Herzl could not have possibly imagined 100 years ago. One would think that the emerging nations would wish to learn from Israel's example. But the opposite is the case. Goaded by the Arab nations, inalterably hostile to Israel, the United Nations has offered more than 100 resolutions condemning Israel's actions.

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pays at least minimal attention to human rights and offers at least some minimal respect for human autonomy. In recent years, most of the peoples whom Sowell holds in such low esteem—the "Africans," the "Slavs," the "Asians," and the Latin Americans as well—have been moving away from political systems that failed to respect these values, and moving toward some kind of democratic consensus. These are not yet the kind of libertarian regimes that Sowell would recognize as the ideal type—but that is precisely because they are not slavishly dependent upon European models, nor do they see their histories as aping the European pattern.

Sowell's thesis is merely a thinly disguised version of the older dependency theory. And dependency theory has been shown, in particular since the end of the cold war, not to work. It is not merely Asia and Latin America and certain areas of Africa that are, sometimes painfully, working out their own autonomous versions of what we call "democracy." It is also the case—Sowell makes no mention of this—that the Europeans themselves, who, in his view, provided the first and the most enduring model of this universal political and economic system, are likewise undergoing a process of radical transformation. The European Union is a wholly new kind of political experiment. So, too, are the new democracies of Eastern Europe. The outcome of these transformations cannot be explained by Sowell's belief in the steady adaptation of increasingly efficient technologies so as to provide higher "standards of living." If that had been the objective, the European Union would still be what some British and American conservatives wish that it were, the Common Market.

There remain many cultures that are stridently hostile to the world in which most of us now live. Political regimes—or would-be political regimes—founded on fundamentalist religious beliefs, and aboriginal peoples fashioning or refashioning themselves as guardians of a depleted environment, survive in opposition to what they see as the oppressive, homogenizing presence of Western culture. All such societies are, in the most damaging sense of the term, "traditionalist." Their claims to identity are grounded on a fixed stare backwards. The Taliban may accommodate themselves to the existence of electricity and man-made fibers and (rather more easily) to heavy weaponry, but they must forever remain trapped within their own territorial enclaves, as surely as the Maori or the Mi'Kmaq are trapped within theirs. They have nothing to offer people who do not share their ethnic origins or their religious convictions.

Yet authenticity is not always the enemy of reform. If there can be any answer to the questions raised by Sowell's irritating and challenging book, it must be that the non-European cultures that are now able to survive as more than "colorful and delightful" tribes—or repressive and homicidal tribes—owe their advances not least to their unfatalistic resistance to a limited "Western" view of the social and political options available to them. They press their claims not in the name of what they have been, but in the name of what they may become.

ANTHONY PAGDEN is Harry C. Black Professor of History at Johns Hopkins University.

The Possibilist

BY JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS

Max Lerner: Pilgrim in the Promised Land by Sanford Lakoff

(University of Chicago Press, 323 pp., $25)

In Plato's *Republic*, Cephalus looks to the "great tranquility and blessed release" of old age, when the mind is freed from the lusty youthful "pleasures of wine, women, and feasts" and prepared to accept wisdom beyond desire. Max Lerner's life offers an entirely different trajectory. He began his early years writing of cerebral matters, and as he aged he became absorbed in the delights of the body. What other great American intellectual went from the shtetl to the pinnacle of the American life of the mind and ended up frolicking in the Playboy Mansion?

Lerner was fond of quoting a student: the "unlived life is not worth examining." And yet it would be unfortunate if the restless, carnal side of Lerner's life eclipsed the many achievements of this journalist and scholar. A genuine "public intellectual," Lerner was the last of a breed of writers devoting themselves to academic teaching and at the same time determined to reach beyond to a larger readership. He was one of the luminaries of the golden age of American journalism, before television came along to announce the news rather than analyze it.

Lerner burst on the intellectual scene in the early 1940s, when he wrote for *PM* as well as the *Nation*, THE NEW REPUBLIC, and, later, the *New York Evening Post*. Launched in 1940, *PM* was an afternoon paper that set out to compete with the *Daily News* (1,800,000 readers) and the *New York Times* (500,000). Immediately it was attacked from all sides for either harboring communists on its staff, "red-baiting" the *Daily Worker*, or "war mongering." This was the period of the Russo-German non-aggression pact, when American communists and Nazi sympathizers became overnight isolationists. But Lerner, worried about the rising anti-Semitism in America as well as Europe, immediately saw Nazism as a world menace and espoused support of England and France. After Pearl Harbor vindicated the warnings of American anti-fascists, Lerner became the great stirring voice in *PM*, where he wrote on domestic America and on political developments in Europe.

Today most Americans have never heard of *PM* or Max Lerner. This is all the more reason to welcome Sanford Lakoff's fine biography. Although it is marred by some repetition, Lakoff's book offers a balanced, thoughtful portrait of a writer who, like others of the Old Left, ended his career on the Right, as an admirer of Ronald Reagan and the dynamism of the market system. But whereas neoconservatives often sank into gloom and brooded about the "suicide of the West," Lerner continued until the end to believe that America holds out as much promise today as it did when the first Dutch settlers sailed up the Hudson and gazed upon what Fitzgerald called "a fresh, green breast of the new world."

Max Lerner was born in 1902 in Minsk, the White Russian city on the border of Poland. About his subject's early life, Lakoff allows Lerner to speak for himself, relying upon the memoir that Lerner intended to be the opening of the first volume of his autobiography. Lerner wrote affectionately of his father and mother, one a Talmudic scholar interested in learning and teaching, the other more passionate and assertive

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in taking on domestic responsibilities. Upon Max's birth the father left for the United States, and the rest of the family, two sisters and a brother, arrived here in 1907. The young Lerner enjoyed a "warm, cohesive family life," even when he never knew where the next meal would come from. Eventually his parents used the money they saved to move to Bayonne, New Jersey and "buy a place with a few bleak rooms, a stable with some twenty defeated-looking cows, a horse, a delivery wagon, an assortment of milk cans, and a delivery route." The whole family joined in the work and managed to eke out an existence. As Lerner recalled, deprivation and discrimination made the Jewish family and the Jewish community stronger.

At the same time, the younger generation took to the English language and had difficulty identifying with the old-world loyalties to which they fell heir. But Lerner never sought to throw off his patrimony. Writing in his memoir of his early schooling, he waxed a little Jungian and a little sentimental: "The little boy who presented himself to the startled teacher at the school in the raw and grimy city was—for all his quivering infirmities and insecurities—the deposit of thousands of years of wanderings and rememberings. What his Bayonne teachers could do for him was minimal compared with what his family and forebears had already done."

The milk delivery business took the family to New Haven. For seven straight years Max and his horse Napoleon ("my confidant ... my Rosinante") made the morning rounds, and in the evening he sat in the attic devouring "trashy novels" as well as savoring more serious stuff, such as Rousseau's *Confessions*, which made him aware of how lonely he was. In high school Lerner received an award for an essay on democracy, and at graduation he was the class salutatorian. He also won a four-year scholarship to Yale, which he entered in 1919, three months before he turned seventeen.

Lakoff documents the polite anti-Semitism that existed at Yale and elsewhere in the 1920s, noting that many institutions followed Harvard in adopting undeclared quotas restricting Jewish enrollment. "No one was deliberately cruel or openly anti-Semitic," Lerner recalled, but his inability to cross ethnic lines made him hunger all the more for assimilation and to come to feel a sentiment that would stay with him throughout his life: the association of the unattainable with the desirable. Lerner majored in English literature, graduated with honors, and looked forward to working toward a doctorate. "I hate to tell you this," a professor then proceeded to tell him, "but you ought to know that, as a Jew, you'll never get a teaching post in literature in any Ivy League college."

During a year at law school, Lerner came upon the writings of Thorstein Veblen and Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., and his interests shifted from literature to economics and law. At Washington University in St. Louis he wrote a master's thesis on Veblen. In 1927, at the Robert Brookings Graduate School of Economics and Government, some faculty members invited Lerner into an office ostensibly for light conversation; after two hours of heavy interrogation, he was asked to step outside the room; within a few minutes, he was informed that he had just passed his Ph.D. exam.

In the 1930s Lerner helped to put together *The Encyclopedia of Social Science*, taught at Harvard, and then took the editorship of the *Nation* when Harvard refused him tenure; resisted communist efforts to win over him and his magazine; supported Roosevelt's court-packing plan and Hugo Black's candidacy for the Supreme Court; called for the New Deal to move beyond liberalism to "democratic collectivism"; and, after the outbreak of World War II and the "grand alliance" with Russia, urged readers of *PM* to understand that the Soviets were bravely fighting a simple "People's War" with the aim of peace, justice, and freedom. These last two notions, the idea of democratic collectivism and the idea of war as a populist mobilization of the masses, are difficult to impute to the influence of Lerner's heroes, Holmes, Machiavelli, and Veblen.

In 1943, Lerner wrote *The Mind and Faith of Justice Holmes*, an introduction to the legal philosopher's essays, speeches, and opinions. For Lerner, Holmes represented the best of the New England mind: an intellectual aristocrat dedicated to public service and a philosopher of a "fighting faith" that provides America what it sorely needs, "militant democracy." Lerner was one of several Jewish writers who sought to adopt Holmes for purposes of progressive politics. But would a true disciple of Holmes, who believed that ideas are best tested in the marketplace, endorse a collectivist democracy that has no place for the competitive market? Would he support peaceful appeasement of the Soviet Union? "Between two groups that want to make inconsistent kinds of worlds," Holmes wrote, "I see no remedy except force."

In the early war years Lerner also wrote an introduction to Machiavelli for the Modern Library, in which he sought to place the Florentine on native grounds, as a "possibilist" who "was in his own day a liberal New Dealer." During World War II, Lerner asked Americans to see Soviet foreign policy as also an expression of enlightened Machiavellianism. Stalin "is no revolutionary adventurer, but one of the men who come after a revolution to consolidate it. His natural conservatism will be fortified by the need Russia will have of getting back on its feet," and the Russians' collectivist economy "makes it unnecessary for them to expand in order to create jobs." Lerner was reasoning as a Marxist, not as a Machiavellian; he saw a people's war when he should have seen a power struggle.

The most influential thinker on Lerner was certainly Veblen, and Lerner's introduction to *The Portable Veblen* (1948) still remains the best analysis of America's most provocative and perplexing social scientist. Lerner admired Veblen for satirizing the predatory follies of the wealthy leisure class and offering a theory

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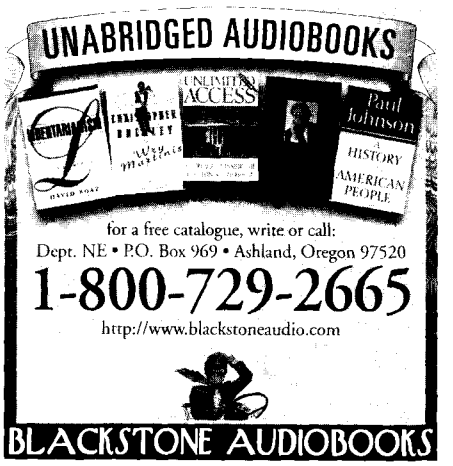

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of "emulation" to explain why the working class aspired to the comforts of middle-class consumption. No doubt Lerner also esteemed Veblen's essay "The Intellectual Pre-eminence of Jews in Europe," where their marginal, deracinated status accounts for their being in the "vanguard of inquiry." But Lakoff goes too far when he writes that Lerner, having absorbed Veblen, "only later [turned] to Marx, and even then his previous exposure to Veblen kept him from embracing the oversimplifications and economic determinism of orthodox Marxism." Lerner's problem was not Marxism, it was Leninism.

In 1938, THE NEW REPUBLIC ran a symposium on "Books that Changed Our Minds," which featured Lerner on Lenin's *State and Revolution*. "What seems to us a paradox—the combination of dictatorship with democracy—is to Lenin no paradox at all." Since the state, Lerner reasoned, will no longer serve its suppressive function under communism, it "increasingly withers away." Like Edmund Wilson in *To the Finland Station*, Lerner completely misjudged events in the Soviet Union, and equated the birth of freedom with the death of feudalism.

Lerner's vaunted Veblenism failed him when it came to understanding communism. In 1929, two months before he died, Veblen remarked to a friend: "Stalin was probably the biggest calamity that had yet happened to the world." During the war, however, Lerner believed that Stalin was presiding over a Veblenian revolution. "Why were the Russian people putting up such a determined fight?" Lakoff paraphrases Lerner as asking in 1942. "Partly out of patriotism and fear of the consequences of defeat ... but also, he insisted, because they had what Veblen called an 'industrial' rather than a merely pecuniary economy." Replying to Max Eastman, who had become aware of Stalin's slave labor camps, Lerner snapped: "If these people are slaves, why do slaves fight so well?"

Lerner's misplaced hopes about the Soviet Union may have been owed to his fear that criticizing the great socialist experiment would play into the hands of the enemies of reform in America. In the election of 1948 such fears left him skeptical of Henry Wallace, whose third party tactic was "wretched," but he was even more reluctant to endorse Harry Truman. Shortly after the election, however, he agreed with Arthur Schlesinger Jr. that liberals must renounce Wallace's pipe dream about Russia as an agronomist's utopia, though he remained uneasy with cold warriorism. He would admit that "Marxism as a historical system drew me powerfully" to the illusions of peaceful coexistence.

In 1949, he accepted an appointment at the newly opened Brandeis University, where he was a riveting lecturer with an audience of admiring students. It was in the 1950s, in the Eisenhower years, that Brandeis brought forth two remarkable interpretations of America and its condition of modernity: Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and Max Lerner's *America as a Civilization* (1957). Marcuse instructed Americans that they are repressed because of their false sense of scarcity; the latter instructed them that they can enjoy freedom due to the reality of abundance. But Lerner's thousand-page tome stands as a monument to another era; it was the last time an American scholar endeavored to write an unifying synthesis to explain this fraying, disuniting country.

Lerner's extraordinary book dealt with everything: America's historical heritage, its diverse people, its natural setting, its literature and popular culture, its suburban sprawl, marriage and the family, corporate empires, religion and education, technological innovation, the style and the genius of American politics, and America's world position and destiny. Lerner well understood the plight of black Americans, "the real outsiders of American life," but his old New Deal loyalties gave him hope for integrated public housing projects and school desegregation. In his section on "The Ordeal of the American Woman" he anticipated Betty Friedan, describing the unhappiness of the housewife whose enemy is time itself. "Where the social role of the husband is that of a man growing to the heights of his powers, the ideal of a mature woman is strangely absent in American thinking; from the time she passes the peak of the socially fixed ideal of youthful beauty she feels herself on the downward slope, and much of her psychic energy goes into fighting off anxieties on this score."

Lerner denied that America could be explained simply as an appendage of Europe; and he now rejected Machiavelli's conviction that history is the story of competing power elites, as well as Marx's conviction that it is the story of class struggle. What, then, explains America? Lerner turned to Tocqueville, who saw America as something new under the sun, a polity without an *ancien régime* whose people are "born equal" and do not have to struggle to become so. Lerner saw America's commitment to democracy as signifying a commitment to equality of opportunity, to a dynamism about innovation and adaptation, and to the material potential of abolishing poverty. American civilization, he declared in a spirit of historical optimism, has produced the "archetypical man of the West," a model of life that is the envy of the world.

Louis Hartz, author of the seminal *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955), responded critically to Lerner's manuscript, pointing out that the conditions that made America into an "archetype" could be limiting rather than liberating. America could hardly be exemplary if it was exceptional, in that it neither experienced a social revolution nor remained burdened with a rigid class system. "Lerner," Lakoff points out, "did not fully appreciate the novelty or brilliance of Hartz's analysis." "For Lerner, America was an example not of natural selection but of continuing adaptation, or what he called 'extended genesis.'" Lerner's faith in progress lay in America's "pragmatic readiness to adapt to new circumstances."

Yet Hartz pointed out that pragmatism "feeds itself on the Lockean settlement," on the liberal consensus that Richard Hofstadter specified in *The American Political Tradition* (1948): "the sanctity of private property, the right of the individual to dispose or invest it, the value of opportunity, and the natural evolution of self-interest and self-assertion." America's "happy pragmatism," as Hartz put it, could flourish in America because the country's political culture avoided foundational issues regarding ultimate ends and focused solely on political means.

Lerner believed that America as a civilization needed only to continue its history of liberal pluralism guided by pragmatism as a philosophy of practical intelligence and good hope. Herewith the impasse. Combine pragmatism with liberalism and American political thought can do nothing but spin its own wheels. What Richard Rorty and scores of liberal intellectuals refuse to face, especially when they insist that pragmatism can take us all the way to "radical democracy," is that pragmatism can express no more than the materialistic Lockean settlement. It provides no basis for questioning the identification of liberty with property. Lerner himself came close to realizing this quandary when he observed that "liberalism has always meant 'freedom plus groceries.'"

In the 1960s, the liberal consensus that had been identified with Hartz, Hofstadter, and Lerner crashed in flames in the jungles of Vietnam. Lerner had emphasized the openness of American society and the comforts of consumption; but students now turned to Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), which depicted consumption as alienation, and pictured the American people as passive victims of what their repressive society

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imposed upon them. America, Marcuse taught, was "society without opposition."

Lerner himself first supported the Vietnam War, seeing it as a proper exercise in the containment of communism, and siding with Kennedy and Johnson against their critics who advocated either escalation or withdrawal. He convinced himself that to abandon South Vietnam would be disastrous in Asia and elsewhere, accepting the domino theory and the idea of totalitarianism's irreversibility. By 1966, however, Lerner had concluded, like many liberals, that the war could not be won. After the My Lai massacre in 1969, he wanted out whatever the consequences.

So did the student radicals who took the war to the streets of America. Lerner criticized the takeover of Columbia University, and he was appalled to see some elements of the New Left falling at the feet of black militants and their anti-American and anti-Semitic politics. He also castigated "moralizing gurus" such as Paul Goodman and other champions of the counterculture. He was mocked in *Ramparts* as "Pontificus... (or Slow Lerner)." In the '70s, Lerner planned to write a book exploring how and why such "infantile oppositionism should ever have taken hold on the American mind."

Perhaps the only good to emerge from the 1960s, in Lerner's view, was the rise of a "new consciousness" about sex, an awareness that the forbidden asks to be transgressed, an understanding that, as Lerner put it, "Eros expresses itself in a society which seeks to imprison it but secretly worships what it imprisons." Lerner was not one of those intellectuals for whom politics was all. (One thinks supremely of Sidney Hook.) For Lerner, the personal was irrepressible. And the more realistic Lerner became in political life, and the more willing he was to settle for the possible, the more romantic he became in his personal life, and the more willing he was to pursue what eluded him.

Lakoff, a little vulgarly, attributes Lerner's cupidity to his being a Jewish outsider with an inferiority complex about his lack of good looks and his small size (he stood barely five feet tall). But Lakoff is correct to suggest, sadly, that the consequences of Lerner's proud lust were not unmixed. "Erotic emancipation introduced Lerner to sexual pleasures he had previously only imagined, but with a paradoxical result. Rather than liberate him, the passions enslaved him to a quest for sensual enjoyment that could not be satisfied in a single relationship."

Lerner met his first wife, Anita Marburg, when he was a graduate student at Brookings. Anita was in love with Max and determined to marry him; and he, despite his doubts, went through with it, with his mother offering the mordant Yiddish wisdom that we sleep in the bed that we have made. The marriage produced three children. Anita sensed Lerner's unhappiness and consoled herself by devoting her professional life to teaching Russian literature. Three years into the marriage, Lerner began seeing Edna Albers, a freshman at Sarah Lawrence and a student of Anita's, who for years endured the affair, convinced that her husband would hardly leave a twelve-year marriage for a woman twelve years younger. He did.

But not even Edna slaked his thirst. It is no wonder that in *America as a Civilization* Lerner devoted many pages to sexual fulfillment and its taboos, or that he showed an inordinate interest in the Kinsey Report. "In recent years," he observed with Roosevelt, Kennedy, and Johnson in mind, "I have been absorbed, as a president watcher, to note how Eros has combined with the power drive in the forming of Presidential character." The man lived too soon.

In his seventies, Lerner retired from Brandeis and took a teaching position in San Diego. In southern California, he discovered the fountain of youth: Esalen and rolfing, the Sandstone retreat and the Playboy Mansion. All the while he seemed guiltless about his pleasures; but he was not exactly a happy man. He could scarcely conceal his thoughts about his mortality. "I mean to die young as late as possible," he wrote jovially in his journal. But he was haunted by the approach of death and the fear of extinction. As one reads Lakoff's poignant descriptions of Lerner's last days, one almost thinks that his spirit was returning to his Russian roots, as he arrives at the Tolstoyan realization that life can conquer anything except death. Lerner died at the age of eighty-nine, in June 1992, at home with his wife and family.

Lakoff's valuable conclusion traces the evolution of a radical who became a liberal centrist and ended up an epicene neoconservative. In many ways, Lerner's trajectory was the trajectory of much of modern American intellectual history. Minus the erotic escapades, of course; but they were hardly Max Lerner's real distinction. His joy in living reached far beyond politics and beyond the life of the mind, but finally the greatest love of his life was his love for America.

JOHN PATRICK DIGGINS is Distinguished Professor of History at CUNY Graduate Center.

TRB *continued from page 6*

ing other than to advocate the election or defeat of one or more clearly defined candidates," and by banning it from the air within 60 days of an election. (And, in case you're wondering, the law covers song lyrics but not "background music.") In short, the bill could have made it illegal, during the two months prior to an election, for a group of citizens in New York to pay to broadcast a song on the radio about what a bad senator Al D'Amato had been. This strikes me as a clear curtailment of free speech.

The failure of Shays-Meehan and other federal campaign finance bills is usually portrayed as the doing of the big-bucks special interests and their incumbent politician henchmen. But campaign finance reform has also been a victim of its own inherent contradictions. It is premised on the notion that money rules in politics, when factors such as a candidate's race, ideology, party, and personality matter as much or more. While special interest money can tip the balance on important but arcane provisions in the banking and tax codes, on the really big issues—affirmative action, say, or Social Security—it's hard to say what, if any, durable impact big money has had. Do the Vermont and Wisconsin delegations support dairy subsidies because the big milk producers in their states give them contributions, or because the livelihoods of their constituents depend on propping up dairy farms?

There's no way to get money out of politics completely, and there never will be. A more sensible reform proposal would aspire merely to help underfunded challengers by requiring broadcasters to provide free TV time—a small price for broadcasters to pay in exchange for their highly profitable use of the public airwaves. (This was, of course, contemplated in Shays-Meehan until the broadcast lobby bounced it out.) Another good idea is fuller, prompter disclosure of contributions—which is one of the worthy features of the Arizona and Massachusetts proposals. Beyond that, government should leave it up to voters to decide who's corrupt and who just appears that way. The campaign finance debate, often portrayed as a battle between good government liberals and conservative fat cats, actually pits two deeply held liberal values—official accountability and free expression—against each other. Both are essential, which means it's a mistake to pursue the former at the expense of the latter.

CHARLES LANE

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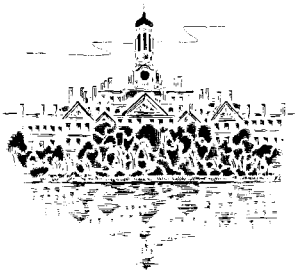
CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

Wye knots

"I THANK YOU," SAID BILL CLINTON to Yasir Arafat at the White House last week, "for decades and decades and decades of tireless representation of the longing of the Palestinian people to be free, self-sufficient, and at home." Maybe the president's words of gratitude are like his words of contrition: fluff, contrived for the occasion. (He actually described the Wye talks as part of "my personal journey of atonement"!) Even so, this is a bit much. During those decades, the chairman deployed murderers not just in Israel but around the globe, and not just against Jews but against anyone, including specifically targeted Americans, and American diplomats at that. Arafat's "tireless representation" of Palestinian longing during the better part of these multiple decades consisted largely of terror, and it is grotesque that the president should thank him for it. Doesn't gratitude imply not only appreciation but also obligation and indebtedness? If so, then Clinton is implying that terror was the only way the Palestinians might have pursued their grievances. The evidence suggests, rather, that PLO murder hardened Israeli hearts and delayed Israeli willingness to negotiate. So the president was not only conveying a morally marred message; he was conveying a false message. Clinton might have said that it was not until the official Palestinians forswore the tactic of violence against civilians (even if they didn't necessarily cease its practice) that Israelis sat across the table from them. More than that: It was not until the PLO seemed ready to move away from its terrorist habits that U.S. authorities waived the law that forbade dealing with Palestinian functionaries, who today are still legally considered terrorists. This message would have been chastening and cleansing. It would also have been true.

IN CONTRAST TO THE PRESIDENT'S fawning over Arafat, there was much U.S. spinning against Benjamin Netanyahu at Wye. I can well understand American irritation with Bibi's last-minute Pollard gambit. Raising the fate of Israel's rightly imprisoned spy was perfectly stupid and utterly irrelevant. And it has particularly offended those on the American right whose valuable friendship for Jerusalem Bibi has so assiduously cultivated. Pollard is no hero to American Jews; he is no hero to most Israelis. Nonetheless, he will get a hero's welcome if and when he arrives at Ben-Gurion Airport, a welcome akin to the arrival from a Moscow prison in 1986 of a true hero, Natan Sharansky. And this will come from those paranoid ultras who still see Jews in the familiar but now blessedly obsolete role of permanent victims.

BUT THE RIFT BETWEEN THIS White House and Bibi goes back to the fact that Netanyahu had offended the president by beating Shimon Peres, Clinton's favorite for prime minister in the 1996 Israeli elections. During the difficult past 18 months, the Clintonites (especially Sandy Berger and Madeleine Albright) seemed always to be yearning for Peres, who, like them, practices "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" diplomacy. He would have signed just about any agreement proposed by the United States. The problem, not grasped by the administration, is that Israel's body politic would not have assented to what he negotiated. The reasons are actually evidenced in the Wye accords. This is not the first time that Israel and the Palestinian Authority have agreed to a transaction whereby the one would give land and the other would reciprocate by curbing terrorism and otherwise limiting arms in its dominion. Such exchanges were envisioned at Oslo and subsequently several times thereafter. What happened was that Israel gave up land and then waited . . . in vain. But this latest compact makes the United States (specifically, the CIA) a monitor and guarantor of the Palestinian end of the bargain, and it does this by delineating 13 roles and functions for American interlocutors. This is exactly what Netanyahu wanted and exactly what his critics at home and abroad ridiculed as niggling. His critics now seem more than foolish. Of course, there is the possibility that the agency will not be scrupulously honest in its evaluation of Palestinian behavior. So great is the American stake now in Palestinian compliance that the CIA may be loath to point out violations. This is a risk Bibi was willing to take, and to give additional land in order to test.



FOR MANY MONTHS, NETANYAHU'S political adversaries were saying the PLO had, in fact, already renounced the parts of its covenant pledging the destruction of Israel and otherwise demeaning the Jewish state. All they could muster as evidence was some legalese from a letter of Arafat's to former Secretary of State Warren Christopher suggesting that various controversial items in the Palestinian document would be changed. It wasn't clear how or when. It doesn't matter: it never happened. Still, arriving at Wye, the U.S. position was virtually identical to that of Peres and the Palestinian Authority. This position was Albright's responsibility, and she obviously believed it in that at once dull and frantic way she has with impossible propositions (like, for example, our purported successes against the Iraqi weapons machine). The president's opacity on the importance of this issue to Israelis was less predictable and more dangerous. There was no way that Israel would give anything more to the Palestinian leadership without a strong symbolic statement to its constituencies that the war against the Jews was over. Yes, there was a structural imbalance in the already-fulfilled and still-envisioned transactions. Israel gives up palpable and concrete assets, basically for all time. The Palestinians forfeit mostly intangibles. That's another reason why their part of the exchange needed to be iconic, totemic. A taboo had to fall, and it had to fall dramatically. Sharansky eloquently made this case. But there was some top-level dissent on the issue within the U.S. delegation. The dissenting view carried the day with the president. At that point, Arafat had few options. The negotiations at Wye Plantation were a success. When Clinton goes to Gaza, will the Palestinian assembly make it the transformative event that is promised? We'll see.

STILL, OTHER IMPEDIMENTS CLUTter the future. The Palestinians have very different expectations of how much more of the West Bank will be handed to them. That they will have a state is near certain. What's at issue is its size and shape. On these matters, Netanyahu, now with many more enemies on the right, has become a man of the center. The Labor Party's mainstream, like Bibi, does not want Palestine to border on the Jordan River. The extent of the new Palestine, like the destiny of Jerusalem, is not an especially contentious issue among Israelis. Ehud Barak will countenance a bit more territory under the PLO flag, Netanyahu a bit less. When it comes to territory not defined by a flag but by its control by Palestinian forces, the parties' differences are smaller still. This is bad news for Arafat, who will not have deep divisions within Israel to exploit.

MARTIN PERETZ

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Is there anything left to say about in America?

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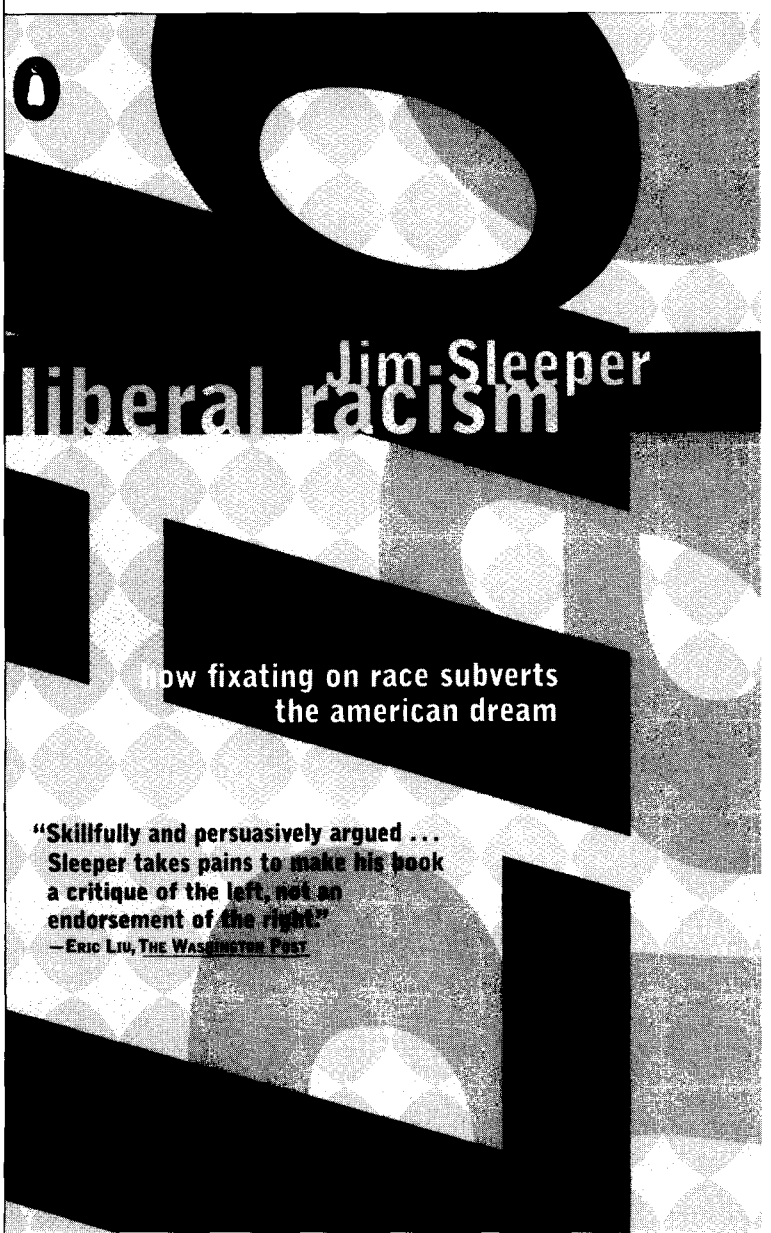
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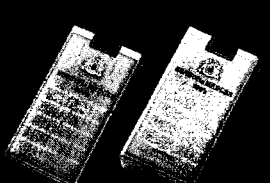

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